

LONDON^{THE} READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 915.—VOL. XXXVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 13, 1890.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[HIS QUEEN.]

VERA'S VENTURE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

CUPID ON HIS KNEES.

For aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.

"Don't, Darcie, you do look so funny; you make me laugh."

And Nellie Rivers laughed merrily at the rather awkward figure of her cousin, Darcie, on his knees before her, trying with all his might to look sentimental, but only succeeding in appearing very foolish.

They were first cousins and she was somewhat older than he was—about a year, perhaps, but quite enough to make her in the perfection of her bright girlhood look a woman, while he, awkward and blushing, seemed like an overgrown boy.

"You needn't laugh at me, Nellie," he said, scrambling to his feet again in a very undignified fashion, for he was long of limb and clumsily built as yet, but with the promise of being a fine man when nature should take pity on him and fill him out a little.

"I'm in earnest, whatever you may be."

"Your mother is," the girl replied, with ever so little of scorn in her eye and tone. "Come

now, Darcie, confess, did not mamma send you in here to me with orders not to come out again till I had said yes?"

"Never mind my mother," the young man said, "I love you, Nellie, and I want you for my wife."

"No, you don't, you silly boy, it is Aunt Sarah that wants Milverstone for you. She won't get it, Darcie, unless I die, and then it will come to you in due course."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Nellie," Darcie Rivers said, rather sadly, "I should hate anything I came into through your death—I should wish I was dead myself."

"No, you wouldn't," said the lively girl, laying her hand on his shoulder and looking kindly into his blushing face, "you would help to put up a tablet to my memory in the church yonder, and you would bring some pretty girl here to be Lady Rivers either of your own or Aunt Sarah's choosing—and if you are a wise boy you will choose for yourself—and you would live happy ever after like a respectable Darby and Joan and talk to your children about your Cousin Nellie, who used to tease you so when you were a silly boy and made love to her."

"I'm not a boy, Nellie, I am a man—since I knew you at any rate," the lad said, earnestly. "I have a man's feelings and a man's heart, and you play with them; it is the way of all women I suppose."

"It is not my way, Darcie," and the pretty, laughing face grew grave as Nellie spoke, "I would not laugh at anyone or play with anyone's feelings; but this is not your affair, it is your mother's. Confess now, are you not acting under orders?"

"My mother wishes it of course," stammered

Darcie Rivers, blushing like a girl, "she said—"

"Oh, I think I can guess what Aunt Sarah said," Nellie replied, laughing again now as she thought of Lady Rivers and how she must have lectured her bashful son; "she represented to you what an advantage it would be on both sides, how I had the property—a fact which she deplores without ceasing, I know—and how you had the title, or would have it in the due course of things, and how much better it would be for both of us if you graciously made me your wife and so kept the whole thing together; but it can't be, Darcie, my dear, and you must tell her so."

Nellie Rivers was a born mimic, and the very incarnation of innocent fun, and she drew up her little figure and gave her cousin such an exact imitation of his mother's would-be stateliness, mimicking the very tones of her voice and the gestures she always employed, that he could not help laughing, though he was sorely dismayed at the prospect of having to tell Lady Rivers of the failure of her pet plan.

Nellie had exactly guessed at the arguments her aunt had used. She had come into the possession of her father's unentailed estate and all his money, and the empty title had gone to the father of Darcie Rivers, who was the dead baronet's first cousin.

Lady Rivers was not therefore Nellie's aunt, properly speaking, but she had always been accustomed to call her so and to look upon her as such. Her father had not been unmindful of the welfare of his cousin's children and had left them a fair sum amongst them, but to their father he had bequeathed only a remembrance.

Sir Wilfred Rivers was sufficiently well-to-do,

and did not need any great addition to his means.

Nellie was twenty-one when her father died, and she was the child of his mature age.

Sir Darcie Rivers had not married till he was considerably over forty, and he had had no other child besides his saucy Nellie, whom he loved with a passionate affection rather foreign to his somewhat reserved nature.

He left her uncontrolled mistress of her fortune, and his cousin's wife cried out in horror at his imprudence when she heard the will read. A motherless girl like Nellie—for she had lost her mother when she was about twelve years old—was no fit person the new Lady Rivers declared to have the command of so much money, and she prophesied all sorts of mischief as likely to accrue from such a proceeding, and volunteered her services to go and stay with the bereaved girl and direct her household for her.

Nellie could not live alone at Milverstone she declared, it would not be seemly, and Nellie declared she did not intend to do anything of the sort. She intended to have a chaperone, but it was not her Aunt Sarah. She and her father had talked all that over in the last days of his life, and they had both come to the conclusion that the governess, who had brought Nellie up and cared for her since her mother's death, and who was a widow of good family and in every respect a lady, should continue to preside over the household.

So there was no necessity for Aunt Sarah to forsake her own family for her, Nellie told that lady—a piece of information which nearly made Lady Rivers shake the dust off her insulted feet and never enter Milverstone again—at least, she said so—until her husband bade her not to make a fool of herself and mind her own business. It certainly was not wise to quarrel with Nellie, and so she pocketed the affront, which she chose to consider had been offered her, and held out the right hand of fellowship to the lonely girl, visiting Milverstone whenever she could get an invitation, and giving Nellie and her friend and companion, Mrs. Carrington, a great deal more advice than was palatable, making up her mind the while that if she could not reign there, as she had hoped to do, her son should some day, in right of his wife.

And of this determination had come the lad's offer to his cousin, of whom he was very fond in a boyish sort of way, but of whom he stood greatly in awe. Lady Rivers had literally pushed him into the pretty morning room, where Nellie was sitting alone, and shut the door on them, bidding Darcie, before his entrance, to stay there till his cousin had said "Yes." Of course she would say it, she told him. She had no lover, and it was in every way the best match for her. If she refused it would be through Darcie's bungling.

And she had refused in pretty plain terms, and he was wondering what his mother would say to him, for that worthy lady expressed herself in remarkably strong terms when she chose, and this would be a pet grievance.

Nellie saw the trouble in his face, and sympathised with him from her heart.

"I can't marry you, Darcie," she said, gently, "even to please Aunt Sarah. If there were nothing else in the way, we should never be happy together. I should tyrannise over you, dear boy, and make your life a misery to you. I am ever so much older than you, Darcie."

"Not a year, and that's nothing."

"I don't mean in actual time," the girl said, gravely. "See how differently we have been brought up. I have not had a mother for ever so many years, and I have been papa's constant companion, and grown up, as it were, for the last ten years. You have been kept a boy, and—"

"And it would make no difference if you loved me, and didn't love any other fellow."

"Ah, but that's it, dear," and the girl's voice took a gentle, loving tone as she spoke that told its own story. "I don't love you—at least, not in that way—and I do love some other fellow. There, Darcie, you have my secret. I shouldn't have told it to anybody. I have favoured you.

You understand now why it can't be, don't you? And you will not think me unkind in saying you may."

"No, I don't, Nellie. But I wish you could have loved me instead. I can't fancy you anyone else's wife."

"You needn't fancy me anyone else's wife at present—I am not going to fancy it myself. But you must keep my secret, Darcie, for it is a secret, mind. Tell the best story you can to your mother. I shall be awfully sorry if she is angry with you, but I can't help it."

She was sorry for him, for she knew pretty well what he would have to endure at his mother's hands. She was not afraid to trust him with her secret—he was the soul of honour, she knew. There was nothing to be ashamed of in her love, she was sure of that, but she rather dreaded the outpouring of surprise and indignation that there would be when she announced her engagement to a nobody, as her relations would be sure to consider the man she had chosen.

What Darcie said to his mother she never knew—she only knew that he went away from Milverstone very much like a schoolboy that has been whipped, and that her aunt took an early opportunity of lecturing her on the enormity of her conduct, which she considered unbefitting to a young woman, who should always yield to the wishes of her friends, she told her, in matters which so nearly concerned her future welfare.

"I don't think marrying Darcie would have been for my welfare," Nellie said, somewhat defiantly. "We shouldn't have agreed, Aunt Sarah, and that's a fact. But I don't see that you and I need quarrel. Darcie will get a wife that will suit him far better than ever I should have done."

"He won't get a wife that will bring him the estate," was the answer that Lady Rivers was very nearly making to her niece, but she stopped herself just in time, though Nellie understood perfectly all that was in her heart, and laughed in her sleeve at her discomfiture, while she listened to a long lecture about the inexpediency of young girls choosing their own way in the world and refusing to be guided by their elders.

Finally Lady Rivers departed in dudgeon from Milverstone, and Nellie was left mistress of the situation, and rather disposed to enjoy her triumph.

"I wonder if she whipped Darcie because I would not marry him," she said, "she's quite capable of doing it."

"My dear, is that a way to speak of your aunt?" said Mrs. Carrington, to whom the saucy speech was made. "She means well, and she—"

"And she meant me to marry Darcie, and I won't," Nellie retorted. "Aunt Sarah always means well for herself. It would not have been well for me."

"No, I don't think it would," the lady said; "you will want a stronger hand than Mr. Darcie to guide you, my child."

"I have not the slightest intention of being guided. I hope when I marry, if ever I do, and she blushed as she thought how fully she had made up her mind to that important step, "that no one will want to rule. Here's the afternoon post bag, Mrs. Carrington; I wonder what is in it."

She was glad of the interruption, they were nearing a dangerous topic, and Nellie had not the slightest intention of taking her companion and friend into her confidence just yet.

"Two for you, four for me," she said, distributing the contents of the bag, "all the rest for the servants' hall. Dear me, what a lot of letters they do have in that part of the house to be sure. Why, whatever is this?"

She had deftly put away one of her letters and held only one in her hand, the one she had hidden was in the hand she loved best to see, and she had no fancy for provoking a discussion about him to-day, she had been too much ruffled by her cousin's offer.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Mrs. Carrington.

"A letter from my cousin, Vera Rivers. I thought she was dead, I am sure papa told me so."

CHAPTER II.

ADRIFT.

All that poets sing, or grief hath known,
Of hopes laid waste, or knells in that word alone.

NELLIE RIVERS might well be surprised at the letter which the post had brought her—it was an appeal for help, but so haughtily worded and couched in such curiously defiant language that it seemed more like a threat than asking for a favour.

She had heard in a vague sort of way that she had a cousin whose name was Vera Rivers, but she felt certain that her father had told her that his brother's orphan daughter was dead, and so indeed he had, for reasons of his own.

Sir Darcie Rivers had ceased all communication with his niece from the time of her mother's death, which had happened some five years before his own, and had led his own daughter to believe that her cousin was dead also.

He had reason enough to be angry with his younger brother, who had led a wild, dissipated life, always coming upon him for help out of the many scrapes he got himself into, and finishing his folly by marrying an actress in an obscure country theatre, and going on the stage himself in an inferior capacity as well.

The baronet had been very wrath at this, but he had justice enough to acknowledge that the wife his brother had chosen was a good and virtuous woman, with whom no fault save her calling could be found.

He had no intention of marrying himself when the news came that the ne'er-do-well Launcelot had taken to himself a wife, but the thought of an actress, or rather the ideal picture of one that he drew in his own mind, ruling at Milverstone was more than he could endure, and he set himself to find a lady suitable to be the mother of the future lords of the soil.

He looked only for a helpmate, and thought only of making a marriage of convenience, but he found love and happiness, and fell as deeply in love with the lady on whom he fixed his choice as ever did beardless boy with his first charmer.

The bright bliss was brief.

Nellie had only time to thoroughly understand how sweet a mother's love can be when Lady Rivers faded away in the unaccountable way which sometimes robs a house of its best and loveliest, and the father and the little girl were left alone to be all in all to one another till he too was taken and Nellie was an orphan.

Before the death of Lady Rivers her husband's brother Launcelot had met his death in a disgraceful brawl, and Sir Darcie had gone to the funeral and had supplied the widow and her child with the means of living for some time to come.

He spoke of his sister-in-law as a lady-like, nice woman and the little Vera as a child of great seeming promise, for whom in time to come it was his intention to provide.

It might be that his wife's death, which happened very soon after his brother's, soured and fretted him, and made him less sympathising with his poor relations, for when Mrs. Rivers died, leaving Vera an orphan when she was about sixteen, Sir Darcie, instead of going to the funeral himself, sent his lawyer's clerk to see that all expenses were paid, and to inform Miss Vera Rivers that she was never to expect any more assistance at his hands.

The girl was stung and humiliated by the tone of the message more than frightened at the prospect of no further help.

She had already made some little mark upon the stage, and could earn a respectable salary, and she indignantly told the messenger that she needed no help.

Sir Darcie had thought better of his resolution however by the time the funeral of his brother's widow was over, and wrote again to his niece.

The letter was not one calculated to soothe

the feelings of an indignant, high-spirited girl like Vera Rivers.

It set forth that the inditer did not feel himself bound to do anything for her—she had no claim on him whatever, and he should acknowledge none should she at any time advance any.

But he did not wish her to be left entirely destitute, and he would allow her a small sum to live upon on condition that she never presumed to intrude herself in any way upon him or his, and that she left the stage at once and for ever. He should prefer her going to America, he said, and if she would do this and not return to England he would use his influence to get her suitable employment in the New World.

Vera's answer to this curious and on the face of it heartless letter was extremely characteristic had her uncle only known it.

She tore the epistle in two and returned it to the lawyer who had sent it, and made up her mind to look the world in the face for herself for the future and take help from no one.

Rather a strong-minded resolution for a girl of her age, but Vera was no common young lady.

Ever since her father's death she had been the guiding spirit of their little household.

Her mother, weak and ailing, and weighed down by the duties of her profession, which fell heavily on her in her feeble health, came to look to her little daughter for everything, so that at sixteen Vera had as much practical knowledge of the duties of life as if she had been double her age.

Sir Darcie Rivers gave no reason for the alteration in his intentions regarding his niece, not even his lawyer could fathom the strange change which seemed to have taken place in his feelings.

"I have my reasons," was all he would say. "I will not have anything more to do with that girl."

"But she is your brother's child," the lawyer pleaded. "The world will think your conduct very harsh, Sir Darcie, unless indeed the young lady has misconducted herself in any way."

"I have no complaint to make of her, and the world may think what it likes," the baronet said.

And the matter had to be dropped.

The girl of sixteen had grown into a woman now, some three years older than her cousin, and was a handsome, determined young person, with a face that should have made her fortune on any stage, and a heart full of bitterness and revenge against her unknown relatives, especially Nellie, whom she imagined was keeping her out of an inheritance.

"If it were not for her I should have been mistress there," she said to herself, regardless of the fact that Sir Darcie was at liberty to leave his money to whom he chose. "I hate her, hate her from my very heart, and some day or other I may have a chance of letting her know what a heavy debt I owe her."

She had searched amongst her mother's papers over and over again for any clue to the strange conduct of her uncle, but she could find nothing.

It occurred to her that there might have been some flaw in her birth, that her father and mother had perhaps never been married.

But their marriage certificate, carefully preserved, put aside all thought of anything of that sort, and she was as much in the dark as ever.

She did not make any mark in the profession in spite of her acknowledged beauty.

She was too restless and had too much temper to have patience or inclination for the necessary study.

And finally, some months before she wrote to Nellie, an accident laid her upon a sick bed and kept her in a hospital for months.

When she came out she had no means of living except by disposing of what few articles of dress and adornment were left to her.

She took a room in a dim little street on the Surrey side of the water, and tried to get an engagement.

It was the slack season and there was

nothing doing, and there were half a dozen applicants for every vacant place, and her heart sank within her as she saw the wolf drawing nearer and nearer to the door and she powerless to keep him away.

She was dispirited and listless too from other causes besides her recent illness, she had had a bitter experience of man's faithlessness and levity, and it had sunk deeply into her heart and stung her to the quick.

She had had a lover, a real one, not the shams that sometimes crop up to the lonely girls who have to fight for themselves in the great battle of life.

An honest lover, at least in outward seeming, who had offered her marriage and had bade her make her home "in the soft palace of a fairy future," a home which he would share with her and love and cherish her therein to their life's end.

It was all so sweet while it lasted, and then the earthquake had come and crushed her young life.

He had gone away and left her without a word or a look or a scrap of paper to tell her the reason for his dereliction, and she was once more alone in the world.

She had no clue to trace him by except his name, and that might be false, and she was not the sort of girl to hunt him up and publish to the world the humiliating fact that she could not keep the lover she had won.

She knew with the intuition that is born of strong passions and a sensitive nature that she was forsaken, that he had meant desertion. His going was no accident, and she treasured his memory in heart as time went on with less of sorrow than a desire to be revenged.

"It's not my way, miss. I'm a lone widow, and I have my house to keep up, and I can't afford to let my rooms for nothing, and if—"

The landlady's shrill voice broke in upon a sad reverie in which Vera was indulging.

She had been out all the wet, dismal morning trying to get something to do, no matter what, so she might keep life and soul together till the winter should offer some better chance of her getting into a theatre, and everywhere she had met with the same refusal.

It seemed as if there were a dozen people for everything that was wanted about a theatre, and at the shops they would have nothing to say to her.

Where had she worked last? What had she done? Where were the specimens of her work? And all sorts of harassing inquiries to which she had no answer, and she went back weary and dispirited with a racking headache which well nigh disabled her from even thinking and without the means to get even a cup of tea to relieve it.

"I am very sorry," she stammered, as the woman paused for lack of breath. "I have not been able to get anything to do yet."

"And I'm sorry too, miss, but I must have my money."

"You should if I could give it to you."

"Well, I believe that," said the woman, softening. She knew full well that Vera had sold and pawned everything she had and had paid while the money was there. "I believe you would and I am sorry for you. Have you no friends at all?"

"None."

"And no relations?"

"I know of none; none at least that would help me."

"I'd try 'em, any way," the landlady said; "surely they won't let you starve. I'll tell you what I'll do. You write to whoever you think will do anything. If they do it grudging like, never mind, it's help all the same, and beggars must not be choosers, you know."

"I do know it," said Vera, bitterly.

"Well, you just write to some of 'em. Put it strong, you know, about being ill and that, and you shall stay here with me till there's a chance at any rate of your getting an answer, and maybe something else will turn up in the meantime—who knows?"

The woman was rough and untutored. She could drink and swear when occasion offered and wouldn't have scrupled to take her pickings out of the cupboard of any lodger who had kept anything like a good table, but she had a woman's heart under her rough exterior and she knew that Vera's distress was genuine.

The girl hesitated. There was no one but her Cousin Nellie, and it was useless to expect any help from the daughter of Sir Darcie Rivers. She felt for a minute or two as if she would rather die in the streets or go to the workhouse door to beg than be indebted to her for help, but life is sweet and hunger a merciless driver, and she made up her mind.

"I will write to a lady I know of," she said, "but I do not think there is much hope of her answering. If you will let me stay two days I will not ask you for a shelter longer."

"I'll not go from my word," the landlady said. "You write your letter and I'll get you a cup of tea and then 'Liza shall post it; you are not fit to go out any more."

That she was not. Fatigue and lack of food—for she had eaten nothing that day—were beginning to tell on Vera and she could hardly hold up her head while she wrote the few haughty lines in which she begged her cousin to help her.

She was glad to lie down and shut her eyes after the welcome cup of tea which the landlady brought her, and when 'Liza returned and reported the letter duly posted she had fallen asleep, utterly worn out both mentally and bodily.

The two days passed by and brought no answer, though Vera knew very well that her cousin must have received her letters; she was at Milverstone, she knew that much, and the post should reach there the first thing in the morning.

If Nellie responded to her appeal at all it would surely be at once.

But no answer came. Day followed day and the young mistress of Milverstone made no sign, and a whole week of weak heartsickness came to an end and the landlady's good nature ended with it.

CHAPTER III.

GONE.

False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

MISS RIVERS took up the letter again and read it once more.

She could make nothing of it but the fact that her cousin, if indeed the person who wrote it was her cousin, was starving and wanted help.

Mrs. Carrington suggested that it might be the work of an impostor, but Nellie would not listen to that notion for a moment.

"No," she said, decidedly, "no impostor would write in that fashion. Why, it is as haughty in its way as if the poor thing was independent. An impostor would have been humble. She is only writing for what she has a right to expect, and she shall have it too. Oh, Mrs. Carrington, look at the postmark, I ought to have had it a week ago."

That was a fact.

"Liza" had told a fib when she said she had posted the letter. She had dropped it down a cellar, and it was only that the man who found it was a decent fellow that ensured its being dropped into the post at last.

"I shall go to London and look for her," Nellie said, when she had once more read the letter. "Poor thing, how heartless she must have thought me!"

"My dear, pray consider," her companion said, "I am afraid you are being imposed upon. And a letter in the first place would answer every purpose. Besides—"

"Besides what?"

"Your papa for some reason or other must have disapproved of this person, or why should he wish you to think she was dead?"

"He thought so himself, that was all," was

Nellie's decided answer. "Dear papa, he would have been the very first to have gone to her help. She is his brother's daughter, and I shall fetch her here."

"Here!—to this house?"

"Yes, why not?"

Mrs. Carrington could hardly tell why not. She could feel that the business was an awkward one, but she had no right to say nay to anything that Miss Rivers chose to do, so she consented somewhat reluctantly to accompany her to London.

"What a pity the squire is away," she said to herself. "He might have advised me what to do for the best. I think he would have prevented it somehow."

"The squire" was Nellie's nearest neighbour, a man who had been the baronet's dearest friend during his life, and whom he had left his executor and joint guardian with his cousin and successor of his child's interests.

The girl was her own mistress, a little too much so perhaps for her own good.

But she was never otherwise than amenable to advice, and could generally be made to see what was for her good.

But Mrs. Blennerhasset was away just now; he and his kind, motherly wife—who was Mrs. Carrington's right hand in all her difficulties with her charge—had gone over to Paris for a brief holiday and would not be back for some weeks.

So there was no one to advise, and Nellie and her friend started for London on the afternoon of the day on which the letter came.

Mrs. Carrington did not like it, she was of the nervous order of women, and dreaded travelling without an escort.

But Nellie laughed at such apprehensions, it was her creed that a woman with any sense might go all over the world by herself and come back as safe as she went, and she declared that men were a bother and a nuisance on a journey, when there were plenty of proper people to wait upon the passengers.

"I shouldn't have minded Neville—Mr. Delamere I mean," she said, with a blush at her inadvertence. "If he had been at home we might have chartered him to take care of us."

"I had rather go alone," Mrs. Carrington said, stiffly. "Mr. Delamere is not a person I should choose for a travelling companion."

"I would," the lively girl replied, "and for a longer journey than that," she added, to herself.

For this careless, soft-spoken nephew of Squire Blennerhasset was the man of whom she spoke when she told her Cousin Darcie that some one else held possession of her heart.

Not the man her father would have chosen for his darling, not the man, perhaps, that a sensible girl with any thought for the future or any strong sense of the proprieties would have selected.

But just the man to please the fancy of an impulsive creature like Nellie Rivers.

He had never done any active harm, or if he had he had never been found out.

But there was nothing good either to lay to his charge. He was idle and restless, never settling to any one thing long enough to give it a fair trial, and always with some plausible excuse for his sins of omission and commission.

It was a letter from him that Nellie had hidden away when the post came in, a letter to be devoured in the solitude of her own room and petted and caressed till she should see the writer again.

Their love was to be a secret for the present. Neville had nothing particular to live on, and Nellie was woman of the world enough to be perfectly aware of all the opposition she would have to encounter when she announced her intention of marrying a man who had neither means nor any special prospects.

"But he will have, dear fellow," she would say to herself, wilfully blind to the fact that Mr. Delamere was idle from choice. "He will be a great man some day, will my Neville."

Mrs. Carrington sighed at the familiar mention of his name by her charge.

She had no idea that matters had gone so far between the young folks.

But she knew that Neville hung about Milverstone a great deal more than she liked, and that Nellie seemed to enjoy his society very much. She was very thankful that he was not at his uncle's house to be asked to join in their expedition, and her dismay may be guessed at when almost the first person they saw upon the platform on their arrival in town was Mr. Neville Delamere.

His being there was purely accident, and his astonishment was as great as their own at the meeting.

"How jolly," he exclaimed, as he took Nellie's hand after greeting Mrs. Carrington. "Whatever brings you to town, Nel—I beg your pardon—Miss Rivers?"

"Business," replied Miss Nellie, demurely. "And you are the very person I want to help us."

"Of course I am," he replied. "I am always the very person. What can I do for you?"

"Help us to find this place," the girl answered. "I don't even know in what direction it lies."

"I should not think you did. It's rather a shady place for a lady to go to. Shall I be too inquisitive if I ask what you are going there for?"

"Oh, it's no secret," Nellie answered. "We are going to find a cousin of mine. You will come with us, won't you?"

"Of course I will. Is it a lady or a gentleman? Stop a minute, there's a decent cab, I'll call him."

He hailed the man, and then turned to Nellie.

"It's a lady," she said, "poor papa's niece, Vera Rivers. I thought she was dead, but she is alive and in great distress. I am going to take her home with me to Milverstone."

"Vera Rivers!"

Neville Delamere was stooping down as he spoke, which doubtless made his voice sound so harsh and strange, and he caught his breath a little quickly as he rose up again.

"I have reckoned without my host," he said, looking at his watch. "I find I shall not be able to go with you. I am awfully sorry, but—"

"And so am I," Nellie said, as she returned in full the hand squeeze he gave her. "Still, perhaps, it may be as well. I don't know what sort of place or condition we shall find my poor cousin in—a gentleman might—"

"Of course, my dear," Mrs. Carrington interposed, somewhat sharply. "It would be quite out of place to take any one with us. If Mr. Delamere would kindly put us into the cab and direct the man, we shall do much better alone."

Which Mr. Delamere accordingly did, and they drove away, leaving him standing on the platform looking after them with a queer expression on his handsome face.

"I think it is just as well that I did not go. A gentleman would have been rather out of place on a female charitable mission. What will be the upshot of it all, I wonder?"

What, indeed, Nellie asked herself more than once as they drove along. Should she find her cousin a person whom she could take by the hand and help, or would her journey have been a mistake and lead her into a scrape after all?

"Paradise Crescent" was not very easy to find, and it cost the cabman a good deal of inquiry and much bad language before at length they stopped at a squalid house in an unsavoury neighbourhood and were told that was the place they wanted.

"Ask if Miss Rivers lives here, please," Nellie said, rather dismayed at the prospect of taking anyone to Milverstone from a locality such as that. Mrs. Carrington pursed up her mouth and said never a word. Nellie had chosen to come here, and she should do all the business herself.

The inquiry brought out the landlady to explain and grumble. Miss Rivers did live there, she said, but she had gone away, and she could not tell the ladies where.

"She pretended to have friends and to write

to them," the irate woman said, "but it was all stuff—no one ever answered the letter, it was just an excuse to get shelter and keep for a week. But she is gone now, and I'll take care that she shall never darken my doors again," and a great deal more to the same purpose, to all of which Nellie listened with more than her usual patience, and then said, quietly:

"She had friends and she did write to them, but the letter did not reach me till to-day," she said. "I have come to take her home with me. Can you give me no idea of where she is?"

No, the landlady could not do that. But she could talk about her own troubles to any extent and the bill Miss Rivers had gone away owing her, which Nellie paid so promptly that she wished she had asked twice as much.

Not a trace was left to tell where the forlorn girl had gone to—not a vestige of anything in her rooms to show whether she was indeed Vera Rivers or only some impostor who had got hold of her name and traded on it, knowing Nellie's character for good nature.

"You are being deceived all round I am afraid, my dear," Mrs. Carrington said as they drove away. "It is almost as well that you did not see the person who wrote to you. You might have been very disagreeably placed if you had."

Nellie refused to believe that there was any deceit in the matter, and was sadly disappointed at the disastrous ending to their trip. She went home, resolving to seek her cousin in every way she could, though she met with small sympathy from any one to whom she spoke on the subject.

Neville Delamere, making a hurried visit a day or two after, completely coincided with Mrs. Carrington's opinion, and declared the whole thing an imposture. Nellie thought he seemed glad that she had been so unsuccessful, and taxed him with it, saying he was very unkind; but he assured her that his gladness was only because he was pleased that she had not been further imposed on.

He professed to help her in her search for the missing Vera, but Mrs. Carrington felt convinced that his aid was of the most lukewarm description, and that he had his own reasons for making it so; and the time went on and nothing came of Vera's inquiries.

It seemed as if Vera Rivers must have gone out of the world altogether, so completely had she disappeared.

(To be Continued.)

WHAT a melancholy world this would be with out children, and what an inhuman world without the aged.

ILLUMINATING OIL CAN.—A New England man has lately invented an illuminating oil can. It is so arranged that the can holds the light and the oil, and is adapted for oiling machinery in the dark, and when in use the light, which is made after the bull's-eye pattern, strikes upon the point of tube that ejects the oil, and enables the oiler to see just what he is doing. Its usefulness to locomotive engineers for oiling engines in the dark should make it a valuable tool for them. The oil cannot harden or become stiff, as the light in the can furnishes heat enough to keep it warm, and it can easily be carried in one hand. Different sizes, intended for all kinds of work, will be made.

THE HUSSAR COSTUME.—"The Hussar," which is one of the last new costumes for ladies is more startling than attractive. The breast is frogged in old gold; the hood, which falls from the collar, hangs not straight down the back, but on the left shoulder; the sleeves, which are extremely tight, are deeply trimmed with gold lace. The skirt, however, is the most peculiar part of the arrangement; it is evidently intended to give the idea of a complete military get up, and therefore the drapery, generally blue or black, silk or satin, is tied back as tightly as possible, and a wide stripe of gold is sewn on each side, from the waist to the ground. The hat is a bushy of either flossy silk or beaver, fastening with gold cords under the chin.



[AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.]

THE FORTUNES OF ELFRIDA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Within a Maze," "Won Without Wooing,"
and other Interesting Stories.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LASH.

The summer skies no more are blue,
The birds sit tuneless on the tree;
The fields have lost their verdant hue,
And all looks sad and drear to me.

THE pier was very full of fashionable loungers, and a vast amount of the ordinary business of idlers was going on. There were old men ogling young girls, and young girls with their eyes on young men, scandalmongers whispering, lovers talking their "soft nothings," children playing, and old and young, rich and poor, gathered to enjoy each other's society, the sweet sea breeze, and the rays of the life-giving sun.

At the head of the pier was Algernon Leighton, chatting with a small knot of young notables who like himself had birth and good looks and in some cases wealth and a title to boast of, if they wished to indulge in vaunting themselves. None of them had anything to do, except to stand there to be admired by the other sex and to make comments upon the beauties who went smiling by.

"By Jupiter," exclaimed one of the group, suddenly, "here's an honour conferred upon the pier. The Duchess of Brabazon—that peerless creature—is coming."

Algernon Leighton paused in a remark he was making and looked a little troubled. He did not lack assurance, but he felt there would be

some difficulty in his passing Elfrida. He dreaded the flash of those scornful eyes, and his embarrassment was not in any way diminished when he perceived she was accompanied by her father.

"A stranger with her too," pursued the previous speaker.

"That's Carslie Harvard," said another of the group, "or the man who goes by that name. I hear there are whispers about his being an impostor. By the way, Leighton, you know the family. Can you tell us if the report is true?"

"Carslie Harward went away when I was four years old," replied Leighton, "playing with his promising moustache."

"I heard you say something about dining at his house," said a third. "You remember that night at the club, when Jennings, of the Fourth, came in so drunk —"

"I remember the night very well," said Algernon, stiffly. "I went to the house and I did not stay."

"Not stay?"

"Well—but you must not talk about it. I don't want to be hard on any man."

It was a very clever way of getting out of the difficulty. He had already made up his mind that his best course would be to cut Carslie Harward if he spoke to him, and his vague reply to his friend answered a double purpose. It was adding something to the damaging reports and made himself appear in a generous light.

"Always better to be a friend to a fellow when he's down," said the other, "but, by Jingo, isn't she a magnificent creature?—a duchess every inch of her."

With a hundred eyes upon her Elfrida came floating up, and sat down just facing the group of young fellows, who quietly drank in the magical influence of her beauty, and, with one exception, envied the Duke of Brabazon. They knew nothing of the rupture that morning, or the bitterness in the heart of the handsome duchess.

There was nothing in her face to read. It

was calm as the waters of an inland lake on a windless day.

Among those assembled were many whom she had met on various occasions, and they looked for some sign of recognition from her, but she ignored them all. She had not come to see friends, but to witness the punishment of a dastard enemy.

Carslie Harward was quiet too; but there was sadness in his face. He was grieving for Elfrida, as he had hoped her lot might be happier than it was, and the disappointment was a very bitter one.

Algernon Leighton wanted to get away, and was on the point of pleading an engagement in the town, when a hand was laid somewhat roughly on his shoulder. He turned round angrily and stood face to face with Stapleton Caveall, who was very upright, with a hand behind his back.

"What is this impertinence?" Leighton asked, curtly.

"You know me?" said Stapleton.

"No."

"Don't lie—any further, Mr. Leighton. You know me very well. Gentlemen," he added, addressing the others, "my name is Caveall, and I am a tea-broker's clerk. This man has cruelly insulted my wife."

He was speaking in a very low tone, so that none of his words reached those outside the group, but many could see there was something wrong, and began to quietly edge their way nearer.

"Your wife," sneered Algernon. "Who is she?"

"Here is what you say she was," replied Stapleton, drawing a letter from his breast. "This is your writing, I believe?"

He could not deny it. With all his audacity he could not keep down the tell-tale look upon his face. Stapleton handed it to the man who was nearest to him.

"Read it," he said. "It is an anonymous

production. Judge how worthy it is of a gentleman."

"Don't read it," said Leighton. "This cur is one of the most miserable liars in existence."

But it was already read, and he who had read it turned away to the others, saying:

"Come away. I think we may leave Mr. Leighton to the tender mercies of this gentleman."

"Don't go yet," said Stapleton. "I want you to hear him admit or deny this infamous production."

"I deny it," said Leighton, hoarsely.

"Liar!" cried Stapleton, and then his hand came from behind his back and he began his work.

He beat him fiercely and unmercifully. The whip was a good one, and in angry hands became a terrible weapon. Leighton fled from him, followed by the uproar of the startled crowd, but the enraged Stapleton lashed him until he fell, and then the men in charge of the pier came up and forced their way between them.

"That whip is loaded," hissed Leighton. "I give him in charge for attempted murder."

"Don't be a fool as well as a cur," said somebody close by.

He looked up and saw one of his late companions gazing down upon him half pityingly, half contemptuously.

"You witnessed the assault, Wrottesley," he said, "and you can see justice is done to me."

"It has already been done," was the cool reply. "Good morning."

Stapleton was satisfied. He gave up the whip and his name and address to the authorities and walked back to the end of the pier. The crowd broke away, and Leighton, as he got upon his feet, saw his assailant, greeted by Elfrida, Duchess of Brabazon, with a smile and an extended hand.

He wanted no more to add to his misery and humiliation and hurried down the pier with his heart and brain on fire. He knew that scornful and contemptuous eyes were upon him and heard some of the remarks made by the less refined portion of the loungers, and the wildness of impotent rage took possession of him.

"I shall be out everywhere," he muttered, "unless I do something to retrieve myself. What a fool I was to mix myself up with those cursed old women."

He had been beaten, but there were no marks for the public to see. His clothes hid the weals upon his back and his body hid the raging of his soul.

It would have gone hard with Stapleton Caveall then if he had stood in some solitary place face to face with Algernon Leighton armed. He would have paid for that morning's work with his life.

The beaten sneak went to his lodging, bathed and changed his dress, and then went out upon the parade. The threatened storm must be faced, it would be madness to fly from it. But he soon paid the penalty of his temerity.

Two ladies whom he knew came by, and he bowed in his best manner. Their eyes looked through him but not at him, and they passed on.

"Here at least I'm done for," he muttered, "so I'll be off to town and set my version about before the beggars have time to write to their friends."

It was too late for him to hope to reach town that day, but he took his sore bones and embittered spirit away by the night mail and went soon in the morning to his club—the United.

Early as he was, the news had come before him, and he was received with the coolness meted out to a man who is "done with."

Only one man spoke to him and that was Major Treaslyan, renowned for his kindness of heart. When Algernon Leighton spoke to him he shifted uneasily in his seat.

"What is this story I hear?" he said. "Is it true?"

"You mean that Scarborough business?" asked Algernon, as lightly as he could.

"Yes, that's the affair. Were you thrashed?"

"I was brutally beaten by a bully, and I can't fight him—he's a tea dealer's clerk."

"But it was young Caveall, wasn't it?"

"That's the fellow."

"Whether he is a tea dealer's clerk or anything else, he is a gentleman. Is it true you wrote an anonymous letter aspersing the character of his wife?"

"I wrote—"

"Anonymously?"

"Yes, I am afraid I did. But it was done in a thoughtless moment. I knew the girl before he married her. She is the daughter of a woman who lets lodgings and used to work in the City. She has been over to Spain with me."

"Worse and worse," said Major Treaslyan, rising; "other people only cracked your reputation in my eyes, but you have smashed it. Sell out and go away to Boulogne for a few years and all may be forgotten."

"What a miserable brute I am," groaned Leighton, as he sank into a chair; "I have lost everything that in my life is worth having."

"My dear boy," said the major, kindly, "you have transgressed, fearfully transgressed against our code of honour and I am afraid you must pay the penalty. But you are young and have all the world before you. They are not so nice abroad—"

"But why should I be transported like a convict?" asked Leighton, with angry eyes.

"You are not compelled to go," the major replied, "but picture what your life will be. You must leave your regiment—of that there can be no doubt. An anonymous letter attacking the wife of a man would floor anyone. And what would your life be here? Could you endure it, do you think? Cut on every side and—"

"I see it is all over with me," groaned the wretched Algernon, "and perhaps it serves me right. I have been hoist with my own petard. Good bye, major. I will do as you tell me and leave my regiment. Shake hands with me, will you? I shall never tax your kindness again."

The major, with tears in his bright, blue eyes, shook hands with him and turned hurriedly away. The spectacle of one ruined in the very bud of manhood was too much for him.

"And what will they say at home?" moaned the fallen man, as he walked out of the club with his head down, "what can I say to my father, my mother, to anyone? I cannot get out of it. A Leighton of Buzzard Hall out! It is a horrible thing. I had better have died than have come to this."

A few days afterwards it was known that Leighton had "retired from the service" and gone abroad, and everybody knew why he went. A hundred versions of his story were afloat and all found believers; but ere the month was passed they were assigned to the limbo society uses for things that pall upon it. A great divorce case occupied public attention, and Algernon Leighton with his disgrace and all that concerned him was forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN EMPTY NAME.

"Twas but yesterday a mighty throng
As one man bowed before thy power.
But all is o'er—thou hast vanished
And will never more return."

"It is announced that the Duke of Brabazon will shortly start upon a tour in the East with the object of studying the manners and customs of Oriental countries. Her grace the duchess will remain at home for awhile, on account of indisposition, and will not follow the duke until next February."

The above was the paragraph that told all the interested world of the severance between the so lately united pair.

It deceived nobody, except those who knew nothing of society and how it hides its wounds with flimsy words and false utterances.

A few days afterwards another paragraph appeared:

"Her grace the duchess has been recom-

mended by her medical man to sojourn for a time in the South of France. Mr. Carslie Harvard, her father, will accompany her thither. The dowager duchess, who is also indisposed, remains at Castle Tournay, and the usual Christmas festivities will this year be abandoned."

The duke went away in his yacht, and Elfrida and her father disappeared—not to the South of France, but to Easterley, back again to the old house in the churchyard.

"I wish to go there," Elfrida said. "See if the house is taken by strangers."

It was still unsold, and Caralie Harvard bought it and re-furnished it quietly, so that it was as much like the old place as it could ever be.

Then Elfrida, her father, Jacob Brierly and Miss Steelson went down and hid themselves from the world.

There was no announcement to the people of Easterley of a duchess having come among them, and for a long time only a few were aware of it. Malcolm Gordon knew of it and his people too, but they held aloof, and Malcolm, who had given up the management of the London branch into paid hands, busied himself in the counting-house at home.

They scarcely knew him when he came back, he was so sadly changed.

His sister Isabel noticed a few grey hairs in his dark locks, and talked of them to Marian, as they sat by their bedroom fire late at night.

"It is more serious than we feared," she said. "I do not think he will ever smile again."

"How cruel she must be," Marian said.

"Let us not judge her harshly," replied Isabel. "We know nothing of the temptations that beset her."

"Do you think it will kill him, Isabel?"

"No, men do not die of a broken heart. The affections may wear their strong bodies, and mar their beauty with scars and wounds, but they do not destroy them."

Mrs. Gordon said nothing, but, always a kind mother, she now became a devoted one.

In secret she wept over the thought of his sufferings, but in public she was as cheerful as ever, and strove to make him gay.

He saw the effort and appreciating it tried to respond with a kindred show of happiness. He failed, as a matter of course.

A man is a poor creature in the matter of sorrow, and, at the best, but indifferently hides his suffering from the world.

As the year passed it was observed that on two particular days in the week Malcolm, in the afternoon, absented himself both from business and his home.

This set his family thinking and conjecturing, so that in the end they were certain he was visiting the house in the churchyard.

"Which is not right," Mrs. Gordon said, "and good for neither him nor her."

Much as he disliked espionage, Mr. Gordon felt it incumbent on himself to watch Malcolm's movements, and the result was, he discovered, that his son did not go to the house in question nor in the direction of it.

He always went one way it is true, but it was to the outskirts of the city, and when he returned he came straight home.

"So you see," said Mr. Gordon, "we need have no fear in the direction of the duchess."

"I won't be so sure of that," returned his wife, dubiously. "He goes on some errand of interest or he would not be so regular nor so reticent concerning it."

"Perhaps he has fallen in love with somebody else," suggested Marian.

"You do not know Malcolm," said her mother, "or you would not let your mind wander in that direction."

Mr. Gordon was of opinion that he had taken to a series of long, constitutional walks—which, being a man's opinion, met with a deserved reception, and was almost laughed at.

"A man who takes long walks for his health," Mrs. Gordon said, "does not confine his outings to Tuesdays and Fridays. He would vary the day now and then."

It was discussed the same day. Malcolm was silent. He was the best of students. At his knowledge. Short. His mother. "I am Gordon. But him, as in the case. "It is expected. So the expected fire was. "You. "Ma. "To have. sit down. do what. He said. self and. what was. He was. placed. "My. "To. replied. "Yo. "Ye. "Wi. place a. stroll in. "I k. She. which. "Th. do not. they w. side." "Wi. "Ca. A si. out her. "Is. your y. "Mo. "I go. my hea. "Yo. "Be. ill. Fe. change. "Te. know s. "I s. West. thinki. You k. windin. sandy. followi. it stop. she wa. knew I. "Pe. "No. It is h. to the. can fin. you wo. "So. "Ye. is not. "Ye. "I. her ar. voice a. is gon. bers!"

It was on one of these days that they were discussing Malcolm's movements, and continued the same subject until he returned.

Malcolm looked pale and worn, and was more silent than usual.

He scarce made his accustomed effort to hide the heaviness of his heart.

At ten o'clock Mr. Gordon, according to his wont, retired to look over a few things in his study.

At half-past ten he expected all to retire, knowing that late hours were ruin to a business man.

Shortly after he left, Malcolm rose and bade his mother and sisters good night.

"I must come and look to your fire," Mrs. Gordon said.

"It does not matter," he replied.

But Mrs. Gordon said she must go up with him, as the housemaid, she was afraid, was growing careless.

"It has been very cold and wet all day," she said, "and a dry, warm room is a necessity."

So they went up together, where, as Malcolm expected, and Mrs. Gordon knew, an excellent fire was burning.

"You see, mother," said Malcolm, smiling.

"Malcolm," she said, tenderly, "I have come to have a little quiet talk with you. Let us sit down together by the fire, just as we used to do when you were a boy."

He drew up a chair for her, got one for himself and sat down beside her. Perhaps he knew what was coming, but he was not at all troubled. He awaited to hear what she had to say with a placid look upon his face.

"My dear boy, where have you been to-day?"

"To the grove on the high sand hills," he replied.

"You have been there many times of late."

"Yes."

"With what object? It is a lone, bleak place and not usually selected by people for a stroll in the winter time."

"I know that, but I am not alone there."

She turned upon him a quick, terrified gleam, which he met with a smile.

"There are two others," he said, "and they do not even see me. I keep to the grove while they walk upon the sand path on the south side."

"Who are they?"

"Carslie Harvard and his daughter."

A silence followed. Mrs. Gordon stretched out her hand and took his, gently caressing it.

"Is it wise," she asked, "for you to embitter your young life by haunting her?"

"Mother, it does not embitter me," he said, "I go and see her and come away with peace in my heart."

"You returned sad to-night."

"Because she was not there. I fear she is ill. For some time I have witnessed a coming change."

"Tell me all, Malcolm—how you came to know she was there and what you have seen."

"I saw a close carriage leave the city by the West Gate one day when I was idling there, thinking of her, as I must think while I live. You know the road, it lies before you like a winding strip of yellow up to the summit of the sandy slopes. I watched it go to the top, following it slowly. I was near enough when it stopped to see two figures alight, and although she was little bigger than that image there I knew her."

"Perhaps she knew you too."

"No, or she would have gone thither no more. It is her desire to hide from all, and she goes to the hills because it is lonely there and she can find air that is pure. She is in need of it, you would scarcely know her."

"So changed?"

"Yes. The fires of her pride are out; there is nothing left but the ashes."

"You have been near enough to see this?"

"I have been within half a dozen yards of her and she knew it not. I have heard her voice and scarce recognised it—the silvery ring is gone. Oh, that I could give my life for hers!"

"You only fancy things so bad. She cannot be dying."

"Mother, she is **WEARING OUT**. Like a fine piece of metal held fast to a grindstone, she is being rapidly ground down, she is sinking under the weight of her burden."

"Would that I could help her," said Mrs. Gordon. "I have not seen much of her, but the little I saw impressed me favourably. I can understand her or any woman being led away by the allurements that were before her. Good night, my dear boy; think as little of her as you can."

"We cannot always control thought," he said, "the images in our mind come and go at will—those branded on our hearts never leave us."

Left alone he sat before the fire a long time thinking, and it was not until the last ashes were smouldering that he aroused himself with a sigh and went to rest, but not to sleep.

There are some to whom sleep will not come in the time of sorrow, but thank God it is not often that the young are so afflicted. Terrible sickness and old age are familiar with the long watch that accompanies this wakefulness, that long, dreary watch when moments are minutes and minutes hours.

Such a time is never more terrible than it is in the heart of a great city. Perchance some church is near with a clock that chimes the quarters and strikes the hours. Oh! how long it seems between the sounds of the bell! How we listen and listen, wondering why its tongue is still and certain that at least it lags; but just as we think it is silent for the night it rings out and the old watching or listening begins over again.

The monotony may be slightly relieved by other sounds, but all our faculties are concentrated upon that bell. Who invented the iron-tongued torturer which even when it rings out with others a wedding feast is sad? Bells are never merry to some people—never merry to me, for I never hear their far-resounding voices without thinking of some sad scene of the past.

They warn of the passing time, they speak of fleeting merriment, they boom out a solemn note for the dead, and they warn us of coming eternity—sad and solemn. But I would not have them hushed. It is well to be sad at times, for life without thoughtful hours and days of sorrow would be but a poor and flimsy thing.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A STORM.

Fareboding gloom o'erspread the wintry plain,
Dim was the sky and silence reigned profound,
Quivering the aspens, while the big gold rain
Commixed with hail began to patter round.

If I could see her smile," said Carslie Harvard, "I should have hope, but her face seems frozen in sorrow. It never changes."

He spoke to Jacob Brierly, who sat by the window with bared head, looking out upon the old churchyard with its long rank grass and tottering tombstones. Miss Steelson sat behind by the fire engaged in needlework. All three had been talking upon what was now an old theme—the change in Elfrida, Duchess of Brabazon.

"I have a fear that she will die," was Jacob Brierly's answer.

"Why should you fear it?" said Miss Steelson. "It is not death we ought to fear in such a case as hers."

"But how terrible her loss would be to us," said Carslie Harvard.

"You see, then, that your fear has something selfish in it," returned Miss Steelson. "But have you thought of a long life of weariness, with the weight of a great mistake upon it? Surely not."

"Then you would have her die?" said Carslie Harvard.

"I do not think she will die," was Miss Steelson's answer.

"Her life, then, is without hope?"

"No. There is no such thing as life without

hope. I would have you all resigned, bearing your lot without a murmur. It is the only way to bear it at all."

"I have received a packet by post this morning," said Carslie Harvard, "it is from the duke."

"From the duke?" echoed Jacob Brierly.

"Yes; it contained a short letter for me, and a sealed envelope marked 'For my wife, to be opened in case of my death.' Would you give it Elfrida now or retain it?"

"I should give it to her," advised Miss Steelson, "it is a thing that ought to be in her charge."

"What say you, Brierly?"

"I agree with Miss Steelson," said Jacob Brierly. "I rely upon her judgment in all things."

A declaration that was not by any means new.

Carslie Harvard left the room and went up to Elfrida's boudoir.

She was dressed in black, and was engaged in writing.

As he came in she arose and met him half way, putting her arms about his neck.

"You are late this morning," she said.

"I have been detained by letters," he replied. "Caveall sent one a little longer than usual. He says that the business he has entered upon is thriving."

"How is Annie?"

"Well, he says. They have taken a house at Sydenham, and Mrs. Draper goes with them. But here is something that more intimately concerns yourself. It is only to be opened in case of his death—the duke sends it."

She took it quietly, glanced at the writing outside, and put it carefully away in her escritoire.

"I wish he would forget me," she said. "I am not worthy of a good man's thoughts. It seems to be my lot to create misery for myself and others."

"Will you drive out to-day?" asked her father, hastily.

He never liked her to get upon the theme of her sad life.

"It is too cold for the hills," she said.

"Then let us go to Eadon Valley. It is lonely enough even for you."

"It cannot be too lonely," she said.

"What time will you start?"

"The usual hour—half-past two."

At the hour named a closed brougham drew up at the entrance to the churchyard, and Elfrida, closely veiled, accompanied by her father, entered it and was driven away.

Hitherto they had gone out of Easterley at once, but on this occasion their road lay through the busiest parts of the town.

Elfrida could see all outside without being seen, the busy people, old and young, children at play, the shops and all the multifarious life that makes up a great city.

They passed the close gate through which, as it happened, a butcher's boy came marching out, subdued in manner until he reached the street, when he immediately espied some comrade in the distance, and hailed him with a loud whoop.

This boy brought back to Elfrida the memory of the day when first she visited Mrs. Harvard.

There was there just such another boy, who must have reached manhood if he lived, calling for orders at one of the great houses with the same subdued air.

Ages appeared to her to have rolled between that time and the present, she had grown almost old; all the life around her had changed, but the great grey stone cathedral pile with the influence of its surroundings showed no signs of change.

Her mind rambled over her life, and she was thinking of it still when the city was left behind and Carslie Harvard called her attention to the river full to the brim with turbid, fast-flowing water.

"In the summer," he said, "it is placid and scarcely moves."

"Like life," she said, "it has its changes. But the river, if it has consciousness—and who

can say for certain it has not?—ought to be happier now. It will soon reach the great ocean and become merged in the boundless."

He did not pursue the subject. When she spoke in that way he always sought to change the conversation.

He talked of the country and pointed out various places he had haunted when a boy.

There was the old wind-mill where he had made friends with the miller, and used to go and watch the machinery grinding the corn, and slide up and down the iron chain used for hoisting sacks, full of life and glee, with little care for social distinction or the destruction of the good clothes he wore.

"The miller was an old man then," he said, "he must be dead now."

"The mill is silent and is a wreck," Elfrida said.

It was indeed so, as he saw on looking again. Then he turned from the mill and pointed to a meadow where there was a stile on which he used to sit watching the hawk pursue its prey. In the winter when the floods were out he had known it to be haunted by the snipe.

"But it can't be so now," he said, "for they have built some houses close by. Easterley is growing."

The journey was weary to him.

It was a day to make one sad—damp, dull, and cold, with huge clouds rolling across the sky, and the world had not made him insensible to the depressing effect of looking upon the haunts of his early days.

Where were all he knew then? He could not tell. Of all the little host not one remained. Like the miller or his mill, too many had found death or ruin.

He was glad when they reached the Eadon Valley—a favoured spot compared to the rest of the land round Easterley. It was sheltered by hills on the north and east, charming groves grew in its bosom, and a purling brook wound its way through the rich land to join the river three miles away.

On a lower part of the sloping hill, sheltered from the cutting winds of winter, a cottage stood with the moss and lichen of a hundred years upon it—a quaint, humble house, built before builders learnt the art of scamping and cheese-paring. It had a garden around it enclosed by a holly fence, mingled with yew cut into fantastic forms, here and there, of bird and beast, after the Dutch style of horticultural ornament.

"You remember this place?" said Carslie Harvard.

"I came here two or three times with Miss Harvard, when she drove out with some friend," replied Elfrida.

"My mother used to hire, I presume. She did not keep a carriage of her own."

"The dean was good enough to lend his occasionally. I used to go to the cottage and get a draught of milk while the others with the carriage remained here."

"Shall we repeat the pilgrimage, Elfrida?"

"I should like to. There was a woman in the cottage who was kind to me. I hope she is there still."

The carriage now stopped, and getting out they walked up the slope towards the cottage. Midway Carslie Harvard felt a heavy drop of rain fall upon his face.

"We are going to have a shower," he said. "It may detain us."

"We can wait awhile in the cottage," she replied.

They quickened their footsteps and speedily reached the cottage door. One of its inmates, an old woman, saw them coming, and came out to meet them. Elfrida remembered her as the same she had known when a child, but the woman did not remember her.

"You'll come in, my lady, won't you?" she said, as Elfrida paused and looked round the wintry garden. "I've a good fire and a cup of tea handy. It's a day to chill one."

"But the sight of you warms me," Elfrida replied, as she followed her in. "Do you remember me?"

The woman scrutinised her earnestly and shook her head.

"No," she said, "you are strange to me. So is the good gentleman."

"My father has not been here before," Elfrida said, "but I used to come as a child for milk."

"Dear me," exclaimed the old woman, "I call ye to mind now. Such a pretty child as you were, and you're not changed for the worse. I used to talk about you to my old man and say that great things were in store for you. I used to say you would make a duchess."

It was a chance shot and an unlucky one. Elfrida grew paler and sat down by the fire, spreading out her hands to the blaze.

"Ay, and I used to ask my old man to come to the window and look at you," pursued the old woman, unconscious of the pain she was inflicting, "and the way you walked told me you would do well in marrying. I see, my lady, you have a ring, and—"

"Where is your husband?" asked Carslie Harvard, to stop her garrulous tongue.

"I think he's down at the cowshed, or in the greenhouse looking to the vine," replied the old woman. "We have a good, kind landlord, and no lack of anything here. But as I was saying—"

"What breed of cow do you keep?" asked Carslie Harvard, quickly, and this question fairly turned the tide.

They kept half-bred Alderney, she said, and pretty cows they were, with a good yield of milk, and if his honour was fond of cattle he could not do better than go down and look at those she kept, while she got a little tea ready.

"Or mayhap you would rather have a little wine or brandy-and-water," she continued. "Neither me nor my good man drink it, but we keep it for our visitors."

Her offer was declined, and Carslie Harvard went out to find the cowshed, which he discovered without loss of time. Nobody was there attending upon the cattle, but the beauty of the creatures tempted him to stay and examine them. In a few minutes his host might probably appear.

Meanwhile the old woman put the kettle on the fire and spread a cloth upon the table, deaf to all Elfrida's remonstrances.

"Gentlefolks," she said, "get a bit of an appetite like other people, when they were out in the fresh air, and it isn't good to go too long. A bit of home-made bread-and-butter hurts nobody."

Elfrida let her have her way, and good-humouredly listened to her talk of the troubles, joys, perfections, and defects of her home—she could not say enough in favour of her landlord.

"He's a manufacturer in the city," she said, "and some people say he don't belong to real gentryfolk, but I knows what I sees and hears, and I can tell the real from the make-ups any day."

"It is not every one who can," Elfrida said, abstractedly.

"No, my lady, it isn't, but when a man that's rich and above me comes in and takes off his hat as he would on going into the house of a duchess"—Elfrida slightly shivered at the word, she had learnt to loathe her title; the old woman, unheeding, went on—"and when he talks to a woman like me easy, not in the way some have when they feel they are patronising, but nice and gentle and considerate, prying into nothing, and yet anxious to know if you are well off, then I say that's a gentleman, and when I've said it a gentleman he is."

"No doubt," Elfrida assented, with a dreamy look. She only half heard what was said to her, but when the old woman paused felt it incumbent upon her to give some sort of reply.

"You never writes to him twice when you wants repairs or anything done," pursued the hostess, "and only the other day my good man got it into his head that if another vinery was built he could make a fine thing of it. So he sits down and writes, offering to pay extra rent as interest for the outlay, and asks our landlord to build one, which he says he will do, if his son

thinks it will answer. So this very afternoon Mr. Malcolm come—"

"Malcolm?" exclaimed Elfrida, rising from her chair. "Malcolm who?"

"Gordon, my lady. Didn't I mention his name afore?"

"No. So he has been here."

"Deary me yes, and, what's more, he's here now with my good man, and if I didn't mention it I meant to. Perhaps you know him—"

"Where is my father?" exclaimed Elfrida, hastily drawing her furs around her. "Go for him. It is growing late, I must hasten home."

"But have some tea, my lady. The kettle's a singing—"

"I cannot wait. Who is that speaking outside?"

"My good man. Mr. Malcolm is with him."

Elfrida made a hurried movement towards the door leading to the back premises, but it was too late. The latch was raising, and Malcolm Gordon, followed by a hale old man in rustic attire, entered the cottage.

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

THE WILD HUNTSMAN: A legend of the Rhine.—About nine miles from Erbach, on the Rhine, in a wild and secluded mountain district, surrounded by forests, lies the castle of Rodenstein, the seat of the singular superstition of the Wild Jäger, the Knight of Rodenstein, who, issuing from out the ruined walls of the neighbouring castle of Schnellert, his usual abode, announces the approach of war by traversing the air with a noisy calvalcade, to the castle of Rodenstein, situated on a solitary mountain opposite. The strange noises heard on the eve of battles are authenticated by affidavits preserved in the village of Reichelsheim; some are of so recent a date as 1743 and 1796, and there are persons who profess to have been convinced by their eyes as well as their ears. In this manner the people assert that they were forewarned of the victories of Leipzig and Waterloo. If the spectral host return at once to Schnellert, nothing material occurs; but if the huntsman tarry with his train, then some momentous event, threatening evil and calamity to Germany, is expected by the people to occur. The flying army of Rodenstein may probably be owing to a simple cause. The power of the wind is very great, and its roar singularly solemn and sonorous in these vast districts of forests. In the pine forests it sometimes tears up thousands of trees in a night.

A BEARDED LADY.—The following is taken from an American journal: The maiden name of the bearded lady, whose remains were buried at Liverpool, N.Y., was Rebecca Westgate. She was born at Pembroke, N.Y., in 1824. When she was quite young her parents removed to Ogdensburg, where she remained till 1841. In the meantime she had married a man named Lyon, and in this year she removed with him to New York, where she remained till 1868. Nothing unusual in the life or person of Mrs. Lyon had been observed till she reached her forty-fourth year, and then a very heavy, dark beard suddenly began to appear upon her face. Her features had nothing masculine in their appearance, and she was greatly embarrassed by the growth upon her face. She employed various means for removing the fast-growing beard, but without avail, and it was not long before it reached her waist. It was soft and silken, like the hair of a child. Barnum heard of her and soon sought to induce her to enter his museum. She was reluctant to make an engagement, but the "Yankee showman" persisted, and her friends favoured the proposition so strongly that she at last consented to do so, and for several months she attracted crowds of

people. A suit was instituted against Barnum for an alleged imposition upon the public, it being stated in the complaint that the woman was an impostor. At the time it was currently believed that the suit was brought at Barnum's instigation for advertising purposes. After Barnum's museum was consumed by fire Mrs. Lyon became one of the attractions of Colonel Ward's museum in Chicago, and was the wonder of that city for some time. She went from Chicago to a museum in Boston, and a little later became engaged with Forepaugh's circus, with which circus she travelled over the United States and Canada. While in Canada an order for her arrest was issued by a civil officer, who declared that she was imposing upon the credulity of the people, and not until a resident of the place in which she was born stepped forward and declared that she was just what she appeared to be was the order rescinded. Mrs. Lyon was of a quiet and retiring nature. Her age was fifty-six.

EXPULSION OF JEWS FROM ENGLAND.—Edward the First, about 1290, drove the Jews out of his French province of Guienne, and seized their wealth and possessions. The great master of romance has, in "Ivanhoe," given a general idea how the Jews were treated, but there were particular horrors perpetrated on a large scale, quite unfit for relation in a popular work. When Edward returned from despoiling and banishing the Jews of Guienne his subjects received him with congratulations. The constant drain of the precious metals created by the Crusades, the almost utter deficiency of a currency for conducting the ordinary transactions of life, had caused the whole nation—clergy, nobility, gentry and commoners—to become debtors to the Jews. If the king, then, would graciously banish them from England, as he had from Guienne, his subjects' debts would be sponged out and he would be the most popular of monarchs. The king claimed a share, but the matter was thus arranged: The clergy agreed to give the king a tenth of their chattels and the laity a fifteenth of their lands, and so the bargain was concluded to the satisfaction of all parties save the miserable beings whom it most concerned. On the 31st of August, 1290, Edward issued a proclamation commanding all persons of the Jewish race, under penalty of death, to leave England before the 1st of November. The Jews were permitted to take with them a small portion of their movables and money for their travelling expenses. Holinshed, the old chronicler, relates a shocking instance of the treatment they received when leaving England. Some of the richest of them, he says, "being shipped with their treasure in a mighty tall ship which they had hired, when the same was under sail and got down the Thames towards the mouth of the river, the master mariner bethought him of a wife, and caused his men to cast anchor, and so rode at the same till the ship, by ebbing of the stream, remained on the dry sand. The master herewith enticed the Jews to walk out with him on land for recreation, and at length, when he understood the tide to be coming in, he got him back to the ship, whither he was drawn up by a cord. The Jews made not so much haste as he did, because they were not aware of the danger; but when they perceived how the matter stood they cried to him for help, howbeit he told them that they ought to cry rather unto Moses, by whose conduct their fathers passed through the Red Sea, and, therefore, if they would call to him for help he was able to help them out of these raging floods which now came in upon them. They cried, indeed, but no succour appeared, and so they were swallowed up in the water. The master returned with his ship and told the king how he had used the matter, and had both thanks and rewards, as some have written." Nearly all over the world this cruel history is traditionally known among the Jews, who add a myth to it, that Heaven, in execration of the deed, has ever since caused a continual turmoil among the waters on the fatal spot. The disturbance in the waters by the fall on ebb-tide at old London Bridge was said to be the place, and when foreign Jews visited London

it was one of the wonderful sights they were taken to see. The water at the present bridge is now as unruffled as any other part of the river, yet Dr. Margoliouth, writing in 1851, says that most of the old Jews still believe in the legend about the troubled waters. . . . The number of banished Jews comprised about 15,000 persons of all ages. English commerce, then in its infancy, received a severe shock by the measure. A few Jews, chiefly about the court, were allowed principally as physicians or foreign agents, but they were not relieved from the decree of banishment nor permitted formally to settle in England till 1656 by Oliver Cromwell.

OPENING OF A SARCOPHAGUS.—The Sarcophagus of Roger of Tuscany, Bishop of Lausanne, who was buried in Lausanne Cathedral in 1220, was, according to the "St. James's Gazette" of October 4th, opened a few days ago. The body was almost intact, the features were perfectly recognisable, and the six and a half centuries had not sufficed to destroy the texture of his episcopal robes.

AT LAST.—Our brains are seventy-year clocks. The Angel of Life winds them up once for all, then closes the case and gives the key into the hands of the Angel of Resurrection. Tic-tac! tic-tac! go the wheels of thought; our will cannot stop them; they cannot stop themselves; sleep cannot stop them; madness only makes them go faster; death alone can break into the case, and, seizing this ever-swinging pendulum which we call the heart, silence at last the clicking of the wonderful escapement we carried so long beneath our wrinkled head. In the very interesting old churchyard of Bolsover, Derbyshire, this idea is worked into a quaint epitaph placed over a worthy clock and watchmaker.

THE LAST STATE LOTTERY IN ENGLAND.—On October 18, 1826, the State Lottery expired, having for a long period of years ever since the days of Queen Anne, contributed largely towards the public revenue of the country. This event took place at Cooper's Hall, Basinghall Street; and such was the anxiety on the part of the public to witness the last drawing of the lottery that great numbers of persons were attracted to the spot, independently of those who had an interest in the proceedings. The gallery of Cooper's Hall was crowded to excess long before the period fixed for the drawing (five o'clock) and the utmost anxiety was felt by those who had shares for the arrival of the appointed hour. "The annihilation of lotteries," says the newspaper of the period, "was determined on in the session of Parliament before last; and thus a source of revenue bringing into the treasury the sums of £250,000 and £300,000 will be dried up. . . . Only one instance occurred where a prize was drawn and a number held by any individual present. The fortunate person was a little man, who no sooner had learned that his number was a grand prize than he buttoned up his coat and coolly walked off without uttering a word. As the drawing proceeded disappointment began to succeed the hopes indulged by those who were present. On their entrance to the hall every face wore a cheerful appearance; but on the termination of the drawing a strong contrast was exhibited, and the features of each were strongly marked with dissatisfaction. The drawing began shortly after five and ended at twenty minutes past six."

SINGULAR CUSTOM.—The "Reading Mercury" of May 24, 1819, contains the following advertisement: "Peppard Revel will be held on Whit Monday, May 31, 1819, and for the encouragement of young and old gamblers there will be a good hat to be played for at cudgels, for the first seven couple that play, the man that breaks most heads to have the prize; and one shilling and sixpence will be given to each man that breaks a head, and one shilling to the man that has his head broken."

LET us all stop the progress of sin in our soul at the first stage, for the farther it goes the faster it will increase.

LETTERS AS TRADE MARKS.—The Superior Court of the United States has decided that letters of the alphabet used in trade marks, but having no relation to the origin or ownership of the goods, are open to use by anyone, and cannot be appropriated exclusively by a manufacturer.

ZILLAH THE GIPSY;

OR,

LOVE'S CAPTIVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Violet's Victims," "Lord Jasper's Secret," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SCORE IS PAID.

Look on me in my sleep,
Or watch my watchings. Come and sit by me,
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the furies.

HAVING secured the duke Lady Alesia and Madeline leave the neighbourhood of Clydale for London, and are at present staying with some fashionable friends at Queen's Gate—friends of a somewhat recent acquaintance, who are, however, delighted to receive the fair fiancée and the gifts she brings.

Lady Delamere and her daughters have known Prince Anatole for years. He has suggested that the Lady Ida's wedding should take place from the Queen's Gate Mansion, as he never means to reside in London in future, and has disposed of his town residence. Lady Alesia quite approves of the notion and everything is couleur de rose.

At present they are all at luncheon; aspic jelly and truffled quails are being handed round; champagne glows freely. Two or three young men have lounged in for a feed—nice-looking fellows and exceedingly well got up. Their inane jokes rouse Lady Ida from her odd fits of melancholy.

Lady Alesia admits that the girl is decidedly strange, so uncertain in her spirits, so variable in her moods. She had hoped that the society of the Ladies Delamere would have strengthened her nerves.

To-morrow will be the wedding-day. Presents are beginning to pour in. Lady Ida receives congratulations on all sides. Her dresses are simply ravishing; she is wealthy, young and beloved, but she is always muttering when alone:

"I wonder if anything will happen to prevent the wedding."

"My dear girl, you are taking no lunch," Lady Alesia is saying, doing ample justice herself to some fine salmon mayonnaise, "really, Ida, you must eat or you will be so weak for the excitement of the ceremony to-morrow."

Here one of the young men remarks to Lady Rose Delamere:

"Case of spoons, I suppose—awfully in love, or awfully the other way."

Lady Rose will be one of the bridesmaids, and is in high spirits. One wedding often leads to another, and Sir Guy Chichester is heir to ten thousand a year. So she laughs affectingly and admires her pretty taper fingers, wishing a certain ring could embellish a certain third finger.

The Ladies Delamere are thorough worldlings. They never look bored at lawn-tennis or balls, have no lover whom they prize as Madeline prizes the duke; in fact, they think she has made a very great sacrifice in selecting him when he is ruined.

Lady Alesia adores these girls, they are so bright and charming, and she schemes to get them married. There is an old saying "A cat will never leave off catching mice," and Lady Alesia will never leave off scheming, even if she

is reduced to the tame excitement of a match-maker and a mere looker-on.

The prince is expected to arrive at Claridge's Hotel to-night and be here the next morning to give away his daughter. He has been most lavish in the money he has allowed her for her trousseau, and she has gone to Elise. Her dresses have been described in several papers—notably one superb travelling costume of dark heliotrope satin and hat to match, and a ravishing ball-dress of white satin and jet, and a dinner-dress of pale blue velvet and cream-tinted satin skirt. As for her jewels they defy description. There are, in the first instance, the set of family gems that the prince gave to poor Selika on her marriage; a tiara of diamonds and a rivière of surpassing beauty, necklaces of emeralds and diamonds, and a splendid parure of pearls to wear with her black velvet have excited the fire of the envy of the Ladies Delamere to a white heat.

They are not wealthy. The mansion at Queen's Gate has been bequeathed them, and they know something of the sorrows and penalties of struggling aristocracy.

"Shall we have a game at billiards?" suggests Lady Rose, conscious that billiards show her magnificent figure off to advantage.

"A rattling fine idea!" says Sir Guy Chichester, smiling, "though I'm a deuced bad hand at it myself; let's make a move nevertheless."

Lady Ida says nothing. Always languid and distraite, Madeline would prefer going to sleep on her comfortable little bed till a cup of tea is brought her by her maid and she has to dress for dinner.

But Lady Alesia thinks exercise a good thing for the girl, and as the weather is too wet to permit of either riding or driving she insists that billiards will be a good substitute.

Lady Beatrice Delamere links her arm in her friend's and Madeline consents to be dragged off for a game.

She hates billiards, she has no firmness of wrist, no idea of grappling with a difficulty.

She is a little, dainty lady, always ruled by a hidden dread.

The two young men select their partners, Sir Guy choosing Lady Rose, and Sir Arthur L'Estrange her sister Beatrice.

Madeline shivers and asks to be allowed to look on.

Hence she perches herself on one of the high seats ranged around the room, and taking out Bertram's last letter reads it quietly through again.

What a splendid career will be in store for her, she has beauty and wealth, she may be queen of fashion, even reaching the dizzy height of every fashionable woman's ambition, viz., that of being a photographer's model.

She will be immortalised in columns of papers with rival professional beauties and have a capital time of it. She adores yachting (somehow she feels so much safer away from land), and the duke writes to tell her that the new yacht she has ordered is very nearly finished. He wishes her to inspect it shortly and make their trial trip together on the "Ida" in a short time.

How delightful it all is, how cleverly she has won—what strange flukes there are in life sometimes—and yet she sighs.

There is the injured girl somewhere in the background, the girl they never sought for, who has been entrapped and perhaps made away with by a savage tribe—her cousin Zillah, ousted from her rights, perhaps half-starved to death in some wretched cabin, the gipsy's captive.

Madeline often wondered why the gipsies never made a move, never clamoured for gain or sought rewards or tried to make money out of the loss of the missing heiress.

Madeline did not know the motive of Thyra in abducting Zillah.

Alas! where could that unhappy wanderer be?

Would she ever arise and cry for justice?

Thus reflecting, Bertram's letter slips from her grasp, and the dazed, weary expression her friends know so well darkens her face.

"Come and try your hand, dear," Lady Rose

is saying, stealing to Madeline's side. "We're winning, you know; don't you hear my balls rattling into the pockets? It's such a capital game."

"Lady Rose is one of the finest lady billiard players I know," says Sir Guy, approvingly, lounging up with a cigarette between his teeth. "She'd knock her sister and Sir Arthur into a cocked hat any day."

Sir Guy has had ample opportunity for admiring those soft, white hands grasping the cue.

"I like a girl one can chum with," he mutters, thinking what a poor, weak, sentimental creature Lady Ida, the expectant bride, is.

"If I had to marry Lady Ida she'd drive me mad, or produce such a tremendous thirst I should take to hard drinking night and day."

Madeline held the cue with a spasmodic kind of nervous elegance.

"Not a bad stroke though," says Sir Arthur, as she made a fair score.

"It was a fluke," suggests Lady Rose, and Madeline agreed with her.

"I can see nothing in billiards," says Lady Ida, wearily. "Papa tried to teach me once, but I made him so angry he threw the cue at me and bruised my shoulder. Perhaps it's given me a distaste for it."

Sir Guy laughs heartily, and, taking the cue from Lady Ida, hands it to Lady Rose, who plays as if life and death hung on the accuracy of her strokes.

"It's the day before her wedding," whispers Lady Rose to Sir Guy. "Girls often feel nervous you know."

"Matrimony is such a tremendous plunge," he says, lightly. "You're going to be one of the bridesmaids, I suppose?"

"Yes; Ida wishes it—she's such a dear girl."

"And the duke has asked me to be one of his groomsmen," he continues, lowering his voice. "He's had some stupid love affair abroad, so I hear at our club—nearly married a barbarian. Ah, ah! so like Bertram. But he's a capital fellow, and he'll float us in champagne after he's married, with Anatole's money."

Then Lady Alesia and Lady Delamere enter the billiard-room together, looking as loving as a pair of Juno's swans.

"My dearest Ida, the heat perhaps is too much for you," says Lady Alesia, as she catches Madeline's wistful gaze; "why not go to your boudoir and make Adrienne bring you a cup of tea?"

Madeline is thankful to escape—the high spirits and abundant health of the Ladies Delamere jar on her nerves.

Never very strong, Madeline of late has grown weaker through loss of appetite.

She finds Adrienne dusting some Sèvres vases in her boudoir.

The clock on the mantelpiece now chimes the hour of five.

By this time to-morrow bride and bridegroom will be en route for Paris—that is, if nothing happens to prevent the wedding.

But what can?

Here are her costly dress and veil, her twenty costumes, her dozen pairs of twelve-button gloves, her elaborate linen, her jewels, and her wedding presents.

Wealth surrounds her, she has the desire of her heart.

"Bring me some tea, Adrienne," says Madeline, with a shiver, "and why is not my fire kept in?"

Soon after Adrienne trips lightly into the room with a silver tray on which appears delicate and inviting slices of hot toast and two or three tiny little cups filled with the refreshing beverage.

Adrienne will, of course, accompany her young mistress and enjoy hard flirting with Fabien, the duke's valet, as they sit side by side in the large rumble.

Adrienne has her new bonnet and dress too, and well-fitting gloves, to say nothing of Madeline's cast-off things.

Hence the lively Parisian is in the best of tempers and spirits.

But she is too clever to appear boisterous—the natural Jesuitism of women comes to her aid, and she invariably soothes Madeline by leading her thoughts to scenes of future gaieties and triumphs.

Madeline wears a very simple dinner toilette this evening, one which, however, is the prince's favourite.

It is of pure white velvet, and it suits her delicate beauty amazingly.

The young men, Sir Guy Chichester and Sir Arthur L'Estrange, are persuaded to stay to dinner, indirectly influenced by Lady Alesia, who is in her friend's confidence, and is exhibiting her finest tact and diplomacy.

They expect Prince Anatole to dinner, he was to arrive at Claridge's Hotel, where the duke was staying, about six and be at the mansion in Queen's Gate by eight.

His well-loved macaroni had been seen to and even prepared by his affectionate and devoted sister.

Bertram was to meet him at the station, and Bertram has been waiting there very patiently for the last hour or two, but no prince had arrived.

The duke has smoked half-a-dozen cigars and drunk several brandies and soda to calm his impatience.

He has never liked the prince—he suspects him of being an artful and designing man, and he fancies he has very little personal regard for himself.

There are also some legal matters to be settled this evening, settlements made on the Lady Ida, etc., papers requiring the prince's signature.

"He's as likely as not to give us the slip," reflects Bertram, after purchasing all the comics and ordering hot coffee. "What the deuce can it mean?"

The train has arrived, and its passengers departed, but no prince appeared.

The wedding will be an impossibility without him.

The duke begins to feel restless and uneasy, but on hearing that it will be several hours ere the next train that may bring the prince he is due at the West End terminus he springs into a hansom and tells the man to drive to Queen's Gate.

He must prepare Lady Alesia and Lady Ida for a disappointment.

They are unfeignedly surprised to see him.

His presence here is a decided breach of etiquette. Dessert is being served when the duke enters the dining-room, and Lady Alesia at once perceives by his face that something unforeseen has happened.

Madeline cares little if they think her absurd, for she flies to his side and leans her head on his breast.

"What is the matter, Bertram?" she cries. "And why are you here and not—not my father?"

"I fear something must have detained the prince," he explains. "I have waited some time at the terminus where he expected me, and he has either missed the train or he is ill."

Lady Alesia has turned deadly pale by this time, and yet she masters her agitation and speaks calmly.

"His health is very uncertain," she says, "do not let us fear the worst. Another train is due late to-night."

"Deuced plucky little woman," mutters Sir Guy to his friend, "she's hard hit, but game to the last."

"I'm sure there's no real cause for alarm," here interposes Lady Delamere, while her daughters glance at Madeline, who looks half dead with terror, "so long as he arrives in time for the wedding all will be well."

"Take a glass of wine, duke," says Sir Guy, who thinks they are all disturbing themselves unnecessarily about nothing.

But Bertram shakes his head.

The prince has one virtue, he is invariably punctual when he makes appointments, and the duke's fears are communicated by some mysterious electrical instinct to those most deeply interested.

"I knew something would happen to prevent the wedding," falters Madeline.

"My dear, you are absurd," says Lady Alesia, with well-assumed indifference, "my brother will be here by-and-bye right enough."

As they pass on to the discussion of other things the butler enters to say that his grace's valet, an Italian called Fabien, is in the hall and wishes to see his master.

The duke hurries from the room and finds Fabien waiting for him with a telegram in his hand.

"I would only deliver it to milord," he says, gravely, "since such were milord's wishes."

"Why, when did this come?" cries Bertram, tearing open the orange-coloured envelope.

"It came about half-an-hour ago to Claridge's, milord. I took a cab to the station at once, and found milord had left. I den rode 'ere."

Lady Alesia's anxiety was so intense she also came into the hall.

"Pardon me, duke, but does it have reference to my brother?" she asks, trembling at last from nervous anxiety.

"Oh, Heavens!" he cries, scarcely realising the horrible truth revealed in the telegram.

"I dare not show it you, it contains the most awful news, Lady Alesia. Your brother has been stabbed—murdered in a street brawl in Rome by—"

"Murdered!" she repeats, staggering backward, and at the shrill echo of her words they all rush towards her, and Madeline sinks half senseless on the ground.

"Tell me, what does it all mean—who has been murdered?" she cries, hoarsely, and Bertram goes to her and takes her in his arms and begs her to be calm.

Lady Alesia nerves herself to read the telegram through.

It is from the master of the hotel in Rome where the prince was staying. It runs thus:

"PRINCE ANATOLE has been stabbed by a gipsy—some wretch who owed him a grudge and has vowed his destruction. The people dragged him back and nearly tore him to pieces, but it was too late. The prince fell with scarce a groan bathed in blood. His body is now at this hotel. His murderer at once committed suicide."

Hence Black David kept his word, he had sent a traitor to his doom, and Madeline's fears were realised—the wedding was postponed.

Lady Ida swooned in her betrothed's arms, all her self-restraint had given way, but by degrees as the duke caressed the silken masses of her hair and she felt his warm breath on her cheek she roused herself with a painful effort and slowly regained calmness.

She was an object of tender solicitude to all, an affectionate daughter who had survived a cruel loss.

The next day the papers chronicled the awful event and it was on everyone's tongue.

"Mother," whispered Madeline, later on, creeping to her side in the chilly dreariness of the wintry dawn, "I cannot rest alone, I am always thinking I see his eyes—dark and vindictive. Where can the dead be? Do they know everything at last?"

The question was so weird that Lady Alesia shivered and was silent.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WEDDING AT ST. GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE.

She paused; her eyes with tears were dim
He thought; she suffers, and through him.

Zillah obeyed the old musician to the letter. She left Italy and sought him at once, and now the tortures of suspense were ended. She knew, or fancied she knew the worst, and a kind of paralysis of dread seized her as she heard him dilate on the villainy of men of the world.

Bertram was not a villain, he argued—far from it, he was a generous creature lending poor friends immense sums of money and universally robbed; he partook more of the butterfly tribe, sipping the sweets of a variety of flowers; he

had a capricious, womanly wavering of disposition and was more of the pigeon than the hawk species; in fact Mathias drew the picture of a vacillating dastard or man of pleasure very neatly indeed, and Zillah, pale and grief-worn, listened and tried to understand his meaning.

Mathias meant to turn her genius and beauty to account and had no wish for her to die and pine away.

For latterly Zillah had languished, the light of her eyes grew dimmer, and she was more indifferent to art.

Mathias watched her with fatherly kindness and anxiety, but he did not fathom the depths of her nature.

"I am sure he will always love me," she would say, unable to comprehend the duke's former distractions ere meeting her. "If I thought not I should not care to live another hour."

They were sitting together in some stuffy apartments in London. Zillah was simply dressed in a dark linsey, and the fire-light played on its heavy folds and the gold threads of her hair. She was docile as a child; she trusted Mathias implicitly, and he, honestly believing it was for the best that the duke should marry in his own rank of life, never let Bertram guess that Zillah was with him here.

As for the girl, it was easy to guide and dupe her, but nothing shook her faith in the man she loved. There was so much passionate humanity in Zillah, she was so ignorant of the meaning of the world's ways that she had but two resources—to love in all fidelity and worship, or to sorrow with the grief that kills.

"If you should be mistaken, my child," Mathias said one day, touching her arm, "if he should forget?"

"Do you want to drive me mad?" she asked, with piteous earnestness. "Why do I bear all and keep silent save through hope?"

"Ah, Zillah, you have yet to learn that to live is to suffer."

Her eyes filled with tears, her lips trembled.

"Listen," said Mathias, gently, "you have a great gift, you have genius, it should be compensation for all other losses. What are the common joys of the vulgar to yours? With that genius you have beauty, you can command the world, and you want to shut yourself up and pine and die for a man's sake. Men cannot love as women do. Would you learn the secret of conquering him, binding him to you always?"

"If I could but serve him," she cried.

But there was a new glow on her dark face, it was less beseeching, something had changed its tremulous tenderness.

"Serve him? Bah! Serve yourself. You are now only Zillah the gipsy. You tell me some foolish tales of your childhood that are like stories of the Arabian Nights. Instead of being merely Zillah, a penniless adventures and wanderer, you can be a second Zaire Desroilles if you like, and ten times grander. You have a superb voice, you have a poet's imagination, you are lovely, and you can be famous. In your fame Duke Bertram, if he has forgotten you in the interval, will return, because others will seek you and he will envy them."

Zillah sank down wearily on a couch, her head buried in her hands. Her simple instincts were then all wrong.

"Men never value the modest woodland blossoms blooming in unseen sheltered paths—they crave the flower everyone is in a hurry to gather and possess. Do you not see? Ah, surely, Zillah, you will not now die for love of him."

She rose, stung by his words, and then she grasped his outstretched hands—her sole sustaining hope was leaving her, but she felt challenged to a secret combat. All the pride of her race awoke. Strength, ambition, youth, and genius were with her still, and the thought of winning the duke in the hot flash of triumphant victory and in the teeth of dangerous rivals was sweet and alluring in her desolation.

"I will do what you wish," she said, resolving to resign her will to his. "You have been good to me. But for you I might be wandering to-day, homeless and starving, in the streets of this great city."

Mathias had long resolved to make Zillah profit largely by her splendid gift. He had trained her carefully till her method was perfect, and in her quiet endurance of what was hard or tedious she sang scales and difficult passages hour after hour and day after day as he bade her. Only her health of late had somewhat failed her. He feared she might droop and die.

Mathias was a quaint and curious character. He cared for Zillah because she suited his own eccentric humours. He was gentle and kindly to her, and she was grateful.

"I cannot bear to think you should be lost for a mere folly. You must try and be happy again. The world you will soon enter as an artiste wants all your courage to face and wrestle with. It would be a crime, child—a positive crime—for you to let any blight eat into such a soul as yours. Wait, persevere, and meanwhile trust to one who is your true friend."

"What would you have me do now?" she asked, standing at the grimy window and glancing down at the surging crowds beneath.

He admired in his subtle appreciative way the deep glow and rich colouring of her Eastern beauty—he knew what that delicate beauty would be in the eyes of men when heightened by costume and jewels and all the adjuncts of art and fashion. Her soul was a mirror of perfect purity, and the wide, thoughtful brow had an intellectual power that diminished nothing from her sweetness.

"I wish you to take a walk this fine morning, Zillah," Mathias said, smiling, and pointing to the sky. "It is not so blue as that of our Italy, but it is wonderfully clear for London. Go, my dear, for an hour or two, and you will return strengthened and refreshed."

Zillah went up at once to her little room, with a vague feeling of uncertainty and pain. Was it, then, selfish to grieve? Mathias said so. She did not wish to be selfish, and if it were true what he said about fame, she would show Duke Bertram she was worthy of a love which he had forgotten. A sort of defiance of his scorn and neglect awoke in her breast. She must suffer always—nothing could change this suffering, but for all that she might be great.

So Zillah set out for her walk in quite another mood. She tried to feel interested in the shops, and presently she saw languid aristocrats encased in rich furs and sables drive up in splendid carriages. Her own cloak was coarse and rough. She found her dark stuff dress splashed with the mud of their carriage wheels.

"It is because I am poor," she said to herself. "Poverty means scorn."

She walked on rapidly till she came to a square, and then entered a music shop to execute some commissions for Mathias. As she stood on the doorstep preparing to depart she heard two nurse-girls talking, and one say to the other, "Come and let us see the grand wedding at St. George's."

Zillah thought she would like to follow too. Her dark face flushed as she remembered that mockery of her own wedding which had taken place in the gipsies' tent, and she felt saddened more than incensed—it had been so cruel of him to show his contempt of her by a mean fraud.

Zillah followed the girls, wondering what the weddings in England were like. She entered the porch and passed on into one of the side pews enraptured with the organ music and the sombre, mystical, subdued light of the church.

How lonely she felt! Did those angel-faces in the old carvings pity her? she wondered. They were like the saints Thyra used to pray to. In a blinding flash the memories of her solitary life with the gipsies swept over her mind, but she dearly loved solitude, and she had seen nothing in cities to entrance her like the vision of a sun-rise or the rosy mists of dawn about the mountains fading beneath its warmth.

Just then her attention was arrested by the sudden sweep of long trains, the "frou-frou" of ladies' dresses, the jingling of gold and silver bangles, and the arrival of the bridesmaids.



[ON TRIAL.]

They were very lovely girls, and they all wore the softest, palest, rose-leaf-coloured satin dresses trimmed with swan's-down, large gold lockets reposed on their breasts, their hats were the "Duchesse" shape and were worn with coquettish grace, while twelve-buttoned gloves were fastened up their arms and completed these perfect pictures of fashion.

Zillah drew in her breath and watched them narrowly, almost enviously. They were beautiful, and yet something in them displeased her. They seemed chilled and hardened in spite of their innocent assumption of mirth.

They dutifully waited in the porch for the arrival of the bride.

After a few minutes had passed, and the church was steadily filling, a carriage and pair dashed to the church's door and every head was raised to catch a glimpse of the bride. The groomsmen had surrounded the bridegroom at the altar.

Zillah was too much interested in the young ladies and the expectant bride to give a thought to the happy man, when Madeline, on the arm of Lady Delamere's brother, entered the church.

Zillah started, as if something in the bride's features was familiar to her. She bent forward and asked a lady in one of the pews if she knew who she was, and the answer was:

"I've heard her called the Lady Ida."

Madeline had perhaps never looked lovelier in all her life than she did to-day—her face had feeling and expression, her eyes were liquid with passionate wistfulness.

Lady Alesia at the last moment had been seized with temporary indisposition—over-excitement it was said—and hence had been unable to be present.

Zillah's eyes turned from that graceful picture of the bride on an elderly nobleman's arm to the altar, and then a low cry fell from her lips.

She saw the duke, the man who had vowed he loved her in all faith and tenderness, the man whom she now knew had abandoned her

with heartless unconcern, standing at the altar about to be the husband of another. She saw the grey-haired clergyman advance to the altar rails, she heard the low hum of voices, and her brain reeled.

All her tender hopes died at one fell stroke, but a prouder glory lit her dark face as she swore to conquer him still—to bring him to her feet as a suppliant. She had been humble, slavish, weak; she had been deceived, as are all weak creatures who trust and love a man. He had seemed to her a god, supreme in majesty, truth and honour. What was he now but a mortal whom she could despise? Ay, she—only Zillah the gipsy—nothing more. And the agony was crushed down and the bitterness was conquered; not a moan fell from the strong, proud lips, she was changed as if by magic. She would not care to prove herself of noble birth, a prince's child, now. She hated and despised aristocrats, as her mother before her had despised them; they set their cruel feet on the necks of the poor, they ruled in high places, they were traitors to the core, every one of them.

Die for such a man as that, swearing one thing to her one day and another the next, and acting a false part all the time?

No doubt he had kissed that girl as he had once kissed her.

She knew nothing of the facile inconsistencies of men of the world, she only understood he was a traitor.

Mathias was right—he knew—he had warned her, and she would make it as hard for the duke to leave her one day as was the anguish in her heart at this moment.

She dashed away the hot, foolish tears—the grand organ notes maddened her brain, they should be playing for her, she should be his wife and take his arm in all reverence and homage as of old.

Never, never.

Another had beguiled him, a lady of his world—the world she had hated and rejected as a child.

Would that she had never left her home, into

what misery had she not strayed, how fatally was she punished for that physical wildness on which they had had no mercy.

They were playing the Wedding March; she knew it well, Mathias played it sometimes.

All the love that had left her seemed poured out for another in its magnificent strains and harmonies.

Oh! the cold, cruel fate that had robbed her of him—and he had given her a rose when he forsook her and told her she was its emblem.

She could have knelt down once and kissed the stones his feet had pressed—she would have deemed it more merciful of him to have taken the knife and sent it home to her heart than to offer her a base betrayal.

But that delirium was over. She was wiser now and she had a purpose.

She meant to win him in spite of all. As her hope died her purpose strengthened.

She shrank into a dark corner where it was impossible for him to recognise her.

She saw him with his bride on his arm pass down the aisle, she heard the silvery voices of his friends in the porch, she even caught the echo once of his own tones and heard the laughter of the bridesmaids.

She had lost all through her reckless folly, but nevertheless she would take what was left her—the dregs of life, but fame with them.

Tears should destroy her no more.

After they had all departed Zillah stood alone on the first step of the church and picked up a flower that had fallen from one of the bouquets and she crushed it in her hand.

A slight shower was falling and glancing at the gloomy sky she turned her steps homewards.

"Here is one of the most celebrated impresarios in Europe waiting to see you, Zillah," Mathias said, on her return.

And Zillah, cold, pale and over-wrought at heart, sang with quickened pulse and passionate pain, but queen of herself at last; and the men listening smiled.

(To be Continued.)



[FOILED.]

ONLY A STUD.

(A COMPLETE STORY.)

CHAPTER I.

IN GARDEN COURT, TEMPLE.

"Is this horrible thing true?"

The speaker was a young girl of more than common beauty, a beauty that asserted itself without any of the common adjuncts that womenkind use to enhance their loveliness, and drew the attention of passers-by in the streets as Daisy Dalton went her way to and fro in the busy streets of London.

She was no wonderful heroine, poor child, only a milliner's hand, and her life, as is the life of all honest girls, was a perilous one.

She was an orphan, well reared and educated, whose home—till she came to the great city to earn her own living and sink or swim as the case might be—had been, if not exactly luxurious, at least full of home comfort and plenty.

Her father had been a clergyman, a good preacher and a clever man, but one who never looked beyond the present and was always intending to do what would make the future of his family some time.

The time never came. And when death struck him down he left a feeble, helpless widow, who had always been accustomed to rely upon him for everything, and a daughter who had never been anything but a plaything, till this stern necessity roused her to show the womanhood that was in her and care for her mother and herself in a fashion that surprised everybody.

It was not long before she was an orphan. The shock of her widowhood had been too much for the ailing wife, and Daisy was left to fight the world as best she could.

She was thankful for one thing, that her mother had never quite known the extent of the misery that was before her.

There had been some little secured for her out of the general ruin, and they had lived upon it and the sale of their trinkets till Mrs. Dalton's death; with the payment of her funeral expenses the last remaining shilling melted away, and Daisy found herself penniless and well nigh friendless as well.

She had but few relations, and those she had seemed inclined to visit her father's shortcomings upon her, and to treat her as if the position she was placed in was her own fault.

Stung by their unkindness she would accept no charity at their hands, and resolved to seek something to do amongst strangers.

She did not know, poor girl, how hard it is to find the work that is so willingly done, and she had to accept the recommendation of a cousin of her father's, who offered to get her a situation in a house of business at the West End.

She was informed it was all that would be done, and that if she lost the place no efforts would be made to get her another, and she went as hopefully as she might to her new life of toil.

Luckily for her she had chanced upon a more than ordinarily careful mistress, a person who had some little regard for the health and feelings of her workpeople, and who deemed it better to care for them somewhat while they were alive than to have the scandal of their dying of hard work and privation under her roof and so losing their services.

It was a bitter change for Daisy Dalton, from the comfortable rectory and the dear home life there to a West End workroom, but she had health and strength and hope—things would change sometime, and in the meantime the rather coarse though plentiful food and the comfortable bed and the dearthiness of her general life were only so many stepping-stones to a better and brighter future, to which she looked forward in a vague sort of way, but which had seemed to be opening during the past few weeks.

There was no provision made for the Sundays of the young people at Madame Durand's. They were all supposed to have friends who would

have them on that day, and madame generally went out herself—it was her only recreation—for, to do her justice, she worked to the full as hard as any of the girls she employed.

If any of them chose to stay in the house on that day, it was generally by themselves, and as there was no dinner cooked, a bit of bread and cheese, or, at best, the remains of whatever was served on Saturday, was all they could expect for a meal.

Daisy had not many friends in the workroom; no one disliked her, but the rest of the girls were all so different from herself that anything like intimacy with them was out of the question; and she took to wandering about whenever the weather would let her, and spending her Sundays in the open air as much as she possibly could.

It was weary work to sit in the park after morning church—for she never missed her church, though it nearly broke her heart to go—church always sent her home in thought and made her heart ache with a bitter pain when she thought of all she had lost.

Many a girl left as she was to herself goes headlong to her ruin from very weariness and loneliness, and makes an idol for herself only to find it clay after all, and to rue with bitter tears that she ever listened to the voice of the tempter.

Daisy's fair beauty and dainty appearance were too striking to pass unnoticed, but no man ever accosted her twice in any disrespectful way. She was so fenced round with her innocence that it seemed well nigh impossible the shield should be pierced, and men went their way and let her alone.

But love came to her at last, when she had been about a year in Madame Durand's employ and had learned to bear her lot at least with resignation—love for the man in whose presence she stood now, with such bitter scorn in her flashing eyes and such a world of contempt in her clear young voice.

It had come through an accident. She had been knocked down in crossing the Row one Sunday, and but for the timely interference

of this stranger she might have been very much hurt. As it was there was no harm done.

It was very wrong of Daisy doubtless to accept a glass of wine from him and let him condole with her and comfort her and finally send her home in a cab; but she had no evil intent, and fancied none on his part.

It gave her something to think about through the dreariness of the hard-working, wet week that followed, and when the Sunday came round again and the sun shone out bright and clear there was something very like a wish in her naughty little heart that she might see the tall, handsome stranger once again.

She did see him and she wondered how he came to know she would be there. She did not remember half she had told him, or rather that he had worried out of her. He had had her whole history almost during the brief time they had spent together.

And the acquaintance had grown, Daisy hardly knew how, and she had given her heart to Hugh Martindale, for such he had told her his name was, as a girl does give it to the man who first takes her fancy.

He was much older than she was—old enough to be her father if she had known it, and she took him entirely on trust. He had no friends any more than herself, he told her. He was a lonely man living in chambers and he would make her a loving and good husband if she would only trust her future to his keeping.

He was so honourable in his promises, and treated her with such deferential affection, that she was completely blinded, and after some little time she yielded to his persuasion and consented to be his wife at a time which he appointed.

It was some weeks off yet, and in the meantime Daisy was to keep her own counsel and say nothing about her future prospects. There would be time enough to make people talk, Hugh Martindale said, when he could show his dear little wife to his friends and let the world see what lovely flowers could blush unseen in the uncongenial atmosphere of a milliner's workshop.

And the confiding girl believed him and went on with her little preparations in secret for the future that was to be so happy, until one morning a letter was put into her hand when the welcome knock had been heard at the door.

She seldom had letters. Hugh Martindale had written to her once or twice, but he had told her that they had better not correspond much, and she had thought him the perfection of discretion and had treasured his rare epistles like a miser's gold.

It was not from him this time. The handwriting was strange to her and the words made her heart beat thick and fast and her head swim till she could hardly see to read them.

"A FRIEND informs Miss Dalton that she is being grossly imposed upon. The man who calls himself Hugh Martindale is a married man. His real name is Hubert Walsingham. He is a barrister, having chambers at 100, Garden Court, Temple, and residing for the present with his wife in lodgings in Bloomsbury Square. Miss Dalton can easily satisfy herself as to these particulars by paying a visit to the Temple between the hours of ten and four, when she will find Mr. Walsingham to be the man who has so disgracefully deceived her."

The letter almost fell from the poor girl's hand, but she managed to keep her composure and get away to her own room without her distress being noticed. She worked through all the day without betraying herself. How she did it only those who have gone through such a heart grief as hers can tell.

In a few days she would be entitled to a holiday, and then she would find out for herself; till then she would believe nothing.

The day came, and with the letter in her hand she presented herself at the place named in it and asked to see Mr. Walsingham.

The clerk in the outer office made some excuse about his master being engaged, but even as he spoke there came to Daisy's ear the clear,

ringing tones of the voice she had learned to love so dearly.

The door into the inner office was open and without a moment's hesitation she pushed it open and stood before the astonished lawyer.

He was only speaking to a clerk, and he dismissed him with a wave of his hand when he saw who it was.

"Daisy, my darling," he exclaimed, when the door had closed behind him, "how came you here? How did you find me out?"

He would have taken her in his wicked arms and held her to his heart, as he had often done before, but she recoiled from him with a look of horror and held out the letter.

"Is this horrible thing true?" she asked.

"What thing?—and why do you look at me like that, child?" he said, though he knew in his inmost heart what she meant. He guessed that someone had told her—someone who knew him and had discovered the fact of his meetings with Madame Durand's work girl. It was awkward certainly, but Daisy would be persuaded. It would all come right.

"Read that," she said, with bitter scorn, "and deny it if you can, Mr. Walsingham."

She had his name then, and he had been just going to say that he was there for a friend. The exposure had been complete—and his brow grew dark and his lips set as he read the letter, which did not set forth one-half of his baseness. He had a wife—a faithful, loving woman who would have laid down her life for him if it would have done him any good, and who had made his home and helped to keep it for him for many years of what she thought happiness, poor soul, only to find now that her labour had been in vain, that there was no love for her in the selfish, cruel heart that she had been foolish enough to think beat sometimes with love for her.

"I need not ask you if it is true," Daisy said, after a moment's pause, "I can read the truth in your face. Oh, Hugh, whatever have I done to you that you should treat me like this?"

She listened to all he had to say in reply, to all the specious arguments that a wicked man can urge on such a theme.

He swore that his wife, the loving soul whose every thought was for him, was a woman that no man could live with, that he was alone in the world if Daisy would not love him, that their love would be no sin, for that it would hurt no one, and all the evil excuses that men do make for their wickedness, and by which trusting and confiding girls are led astray.

Daisy listened with a calm, resolute face until he had done, and then she lifted her eyes to his. She was quiet and there was such love in her face that he thought she was won, but she drew back when he would have taken her hand.

"Never again," she said; "you and I must never meet again in this world. I hope Heaven will forgive you for the wrong you meant to do me and the wrong you HAVE done. You have blighted my life, Hubert Walsingham. It was dreary enough before I knew you, it will be utterly desolate now."

Again he tried to urge her, but she faced him with scorn.

"Don't make me hate you," she said. "I loved you dearly, Heaven alone knows how much. I should hate both you and myself if I listened to you for another minute. Do you know what you are asking me to do?"

"I am asking you to help me to forget a most miserable existence and come away with me to where we can be happy as the day is long. There will be no sin in what we do; you will be my wife in the sight of Heaven and in my love and honour."

"And your mistress in the eyes of the world. I would not be that for a king's ransom. Good bye, Mr. Walsingham; when you look at these they will serve to remind you that a girl, weak though she may be, is not to be made the prey of a designing villain because she happens to be friendless and alone."

She laid a small parcel on the table and walked out of the office before he had time to prevent her.

In the package was everything he had ever

given her, not very much—for she would accept so little at his hands—but enough to show that there had been love-making between them.

He thrust it out of sight with a curse. "I WILL win her," he said. "I will have her, come what may. My little darling."

CHAPTER II.

AT VESPERS.

THE occupant of the chambers at Garden Court paced up and down his handsomely-furnished room after Daisy's departure like a caged lion.

"Who was it?" he said, furiously, to himself. "Who has dared to pry into my business and interfere in my affairs? Can it—No; I will not think of it. If I did I could not stay my hand. It is impossible. There has been no clue, no hint. Some fool or other has seen us together and has made it his or her business to spoil my happiness and hers. My darling! She shall be mine yet in spite of them all."

The next day but one was Sunday and he haunted the park, in spite of what had passed, in the hope of seeing the girl he had so grievously wronged, and for whom he had conceived a passion as degrading to the name of love as it was fierce and burning. She was not there—if he had only known it she was many miles away. She had done the very best thing that could be done under the circumstances and made a confidante of Madame Durand.

There was not much that was sympathetic in the milliner, at least on the surface, but she had a good, honest heart of her own and she opened it wide to the story of Daisy's troubles.

The girl told her what had happened, suppressing only the name of the man who so basely attempted to ruin her, and begged her to help her to get away from London.

Madame had another establishment in Birmingham of rather a different character, not so aristocratic as the West End business, but paying very well, and she, after awhile, consented to let Miss Dalton go there till the press of the season should come on again.

"Go and forget all about it, my dear," she said, kindly, to the weeping girl, "and thank Heaven for that letter, it saved you from ruin."

There was no clue to the writer of it. But what did that signify now? It was true, and that horrible fact could not be undone by finding out the writer. Daisy never tried, but Hubert Walsingham did, without success. Even his legal acumen was at fault. The letter had done its work, and the writer had contrived to escape scot free.

"I shall find him some day," the lawyer said to himself, as he walked home from the park to his lodgings in Bloomsbury Square, "and when I do Heaven help him. I will set my heel on his face if I have to swing for it."

He was sojourning in one of the most roomy and comfortable of the old houses in the square. He was going to purchase a house, and he had brought his wife up to town ostensibly to help him in the selection. He was outwardly civil to her. No one seeing them together could have guessed how bitterly her heart ached under her cloak of outward calmness. She knew full well, poor woman, that she had committed the worst of crimes in a man's sight, and "outlived his liking." She was slightly his senior, a year or so, but she had grown old in the life of work that she had shared till he had risen beyond the need of any help from her, and then she had learned what a brittle reed a man's faith and love can be to lean on, and how, being beyond the need of its aid, he is ever ready to throw aside the ladder which he found so useful in stepping up.

She had lost her youth in his service, and he would have been glad if she had gone along with it, and taken her lined face and her whitening hair out of his ken. She was waiting for him when he went home after his unsuccessful quest in the park, and if she thought him a shade more morose and surly than was usual

with him, she was too much accustomed to his humours to provoke any hard words by remarking on it. Her life was one long endurance, and she was thankful when it could be passive only.

"I was afraid you would be too late," she said, gently, as she helped him off with his light overcoat and rang for dinner.

"Too late for what?"

"To go to St. Gudule's. You said you would go with me to hear the grand vespers. There is to be some excellent singing."

"Did I promise to go?"

"You did."

"Ah, well, I have altered my mind—I shan't."

She looked a little disappointed, but she was used to disappointments at his hands, and he said, coldly:

"I don't want to hinder you from going. There is no occasion for you to stay at home."

"Don't you mind my going by myself, Hubert?"

"No? Why should I? Please yourself."

Her lip quivered for a moment. No matter how long she may have been used to it, the knowledge that her husband is utterly indifferent to her, and cares nothing about where she goes or what she does, always sends a sting to a wife's heart, and then she turned away as coldly as he had spoken.

"Very well, then I will go," she said.

She went out quietly, and the landlady entering the room presently, thinking both her lodgers were out, found Mr. Walsingham there alone. He was sitting on the sofa looking very ill, with his face quite colourless and his lips set. Some torn paper was scattered on the floor. He seemed to have been arranging letters and to have been taken ill in the midst of it.

"It is nothing," he said, in answer to her anxious inquiries. "I am really quite well again now, though I daresay to your eyes I do not look so. I have had a spasmodic attack, and they always leave me looking terribly shattered. There is not the slightest cause for alarm. I shall lie down for awhile. May I beg that no one may disturb me for an hour?" Mrs. Walsingham may be back by that time."

"No one shall come anyhow you, sir, till you ring," the landlady replied. "But is there nothing I can get for you?"

"Nothing, thank you. All I require is a little brandy—and I have taken that—and rest. These fits leave me literally without the power of walking."

"And they will leave him without the power of doing anything in this world at all someday," the woman said to her husband when she went to her own dominions. "He looks like death this minute."

An hour later she sent up again to the room and gently tapped at the door. She was bidden to come in in a feeble voice, and found her lodger looking worse than when she saw him before. He was trembling all over, and acknowledged to having had another rather bad seizure.

"I really think I must get to bed," he said, "I feel quite unstrung. I will wait a little and see if Mrs. Walsingham returns. I think church should be over now."

"My Bessie has been home this quarter of an hour, sir. I should think that your good lady won't be long now."

But the time dragged on and no Mrs. Walsingham appeared, and they wondered first, and then grew uneasy, for she was not a woman to stay out anywhere. Hubert Walsingham did not appear to be able to comprehend what was the matter. His indisposition increased so rapidly that they were obliged to get him to bed and send for the nearest doctor. He seemed delirious, and looked like a man in the very jaws of death. All night long they watched and waited by his side, not knowing what to do or whom to send for. There was no one to tell them where the missing wife had gone, and the day came once more and she had not come back.

The pretty Catholic church of St. Gudule was almost close to where the Walsinghams had taken up their residence, and the weary lady,

with her heart full of sorrows, often found a sort of solace from the sweet music and the solemn service of the ritual there. She was not a Catholic, she had been reared in the Protestant faith, but she saw much to reverence and admire in the services of the church, and often came out soothed and comforted, and better able to cope with the troubles of her life after a visit to St. Gudule's.

No one there knew her. She came and went unnoticed. She was not one of those people who will be seen wherever they go, and she slipped into the church in her usual quiet way and knelt down in the first corner she could find. It was close to a massive pillar. The pillars at St. Gudule's were out of all proportion to the size of the church, and were often complained of as hiding the priests and choir from the rest of the congregation.

Mrs. Walsingham was rather glad of the shelter of the shadow. She was feeling more than usually depressed that night, and she could bow her head and let the relieving tears fall unchecked in the friendly hiding it afforded. She did not rise from her knees when the rest of the congregation did at the conclusion of the vespers, but knelt still, with her head pressed against the cold stone of the pillar. It was no unusual thing for one or two people to stay kneeling while the rest passed out, and she was not particularly remarked.

No one noticed her, and presently one or two of the lights were put out, leaving the place where she was in deep shadow. Still she knelt, unheeding and oblivious to all that was passing around her, and the lights were put out one by one and the church looked up, and she was there alone in the stillness and darkness.

She was there when the man in office came to open the church in the morning, and, terrified at her appearance and thinking she had fainted, he touched her on the shoulder. She fell over at the touch—a horrible stiffened heap—and the next moment his shriek for help rang through the church—and brought in the early passers-by to see what was the matter.

He might well shout. Mrs. Walsingham was dead—cold and stiff for many an hour before the day dawned—and nothing left to tell how she died except the stab which had killed her. It was a wound in the back, struck straight and sure by an unerring hand, which had left the instrument of death—a long thin dagger—sticking where it had struck. There was no mark on the weapon, which had a dark handle that had been hidden by some loose drapery the hapless lady wore.

Nothing to tell how she came to be there—dead and cold—while the stars had shone out over her head and her spirit had winged its flight to the unseen world, to understand there perchance the reason why it had been so tried in this one. Yes, there was one thing—a tiny stud—a queer, quaint thing of green enamel, with a monkey's head peeping out through the brilliance in an odd, undefinable fashion. Sometimes it was there, sometimes not, according how the stud was held and the light it was in. It was sticking in the lace of her mantle, very close to the fatal dagger, and had doubtless fallen from the wrist that had aimed the cruel blow.

The lady's name and address were in a card case she carried, so the news was not long in finding its way to her temporary home, being taken by a policeman who came to demand Mr. Walsingham's presence at the office where the body had been taken.

"I don't believe he'll understand what you have to tell him, poor dear," the landlady said through her tears at the news. She had liked her lodger's wife very much, and had never seen anything to give her the least idea that they were not the happiest of couples.

"It's my belief he's on his deathbed himself. He was ill when he went out last night, and he has never lifted his head since."

It seemed as if he hardly did understand. He had kept up a strange sort of wail for his wife all night, and had sunk into a half slumber when the policeman came. He was utterly unable to rise, and lay like one dead for hours after he

had been made to understand what had happened.

Strangers had to go and identify the poor remains and see to the disposal of the poor corpse and the offer of a reward for the discovery of her murderer. It was offered in vain. There was no one to bring the crime home to, and a curious thing happened to the custodians of the little stud. It was lost—no one could tell where or how—whether dropped by one of the many who went to look at it, or purposely taken away, no one could tell.

The coroner's jury were fain to bring in a verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown, and the poor victim was buried, and the nine days' wonder came to an end.

CHAPTER III.

PAID IN FULL.

DAISY DALTON read the terrible story of the "Walsingham Murder," as it came to be called in the papers, and the description of the dagger and the stud—the only two things that appeared to give any clue to the perpetration of the deed.

The narrative had a strange effect on her—doubtless from the misery which the husband of the dead woman had brought upon his unhappy wife and herself. She returned to town, accounting to Madame Durand for having done so by inventing some business of her own, and made her way to the police office where the two articles were to be seen.

She had some little difficulty in getting permission to look at them, but it was accorded at last, and she went away with a strange, resolute look in her young eyes that did not escape the keen intelligence of the man on duty.

She knew nothing, she said, she had been misled by the description of the stud, she fancied it was like one she knew of, but she was thankful to say it was not.

She might have been followed up, perhaps, and her doings inquired into, but for the loss of the piece of evidence, which came about after, and which had the effect of causing the whole business to be hushed up rather quickly lest there should be an inquiry into the bungling that had led to such a disaster.

No one knew how the stud went, but it did go—dropped on the floor in some careless fashion, was the general verdict. It had been looked at by a great number of people, but no one had identified it or seen anything like it before.

The police did all sorts of odd things after their manner, and it was rather a risky thing to wear anything green at the wrist if the wearer did not want to be scrutinised and questioned; but the thing died out after a time, as such things do, and the widower got well and went away from Bloomsbury Square.

Everybody pitied him very much; it was such an awful loss for him, and of course it was all a mistake—the poor lady had been taken for some one else, and that was in a great measure the reason the affair had never been explained.

Hubert Walsingham went back to his business at Garden Court with a sad face and a suit of deep mourning, but both were like a mockery, for his mad passion for Daisy Dalton had never abated.

It was not a wicked love now, he was free and could make the girl his wife. She would come to him now if he could find her, he was sure, and he set himself to seek her.

The quest was not a difficult one, and one day Daisy received a letter in the well-known hand. It told her that his love had never changed, that he was waiting for her with impatience that he could not describe, and begging her to say where and when he could see her.

There was no doubt expressed of her ready consent, he never imagined that she would say him nay now, and he poured out his passion on the senseless paper in a way that made the fair face flush and the great eyes glitter as Daisy read his ardent protestations.

"I will go to Mr. Walsingham," she said to herself, "I will answer his letter in person. He will be glad to see me doubtless—his bride that is to be."

She was wonderfully changed from the Daisy of old; there was a hard, set look about her young face that seemed very foreign to her nature, and a wan, worn appearance about her eyes that told of nights of watching and sleeplessness.

She petitioned Madame Durand for leave to come to town, telling her that her journey would have something to do with the love affair that had been so disastrous; she told her that the gentleman had renewed his offer in a legitimate way now, he being a widower, but she deemed it best to refuse him and wished to tell him so in person.

Madame was rather interested in the romance of the thing, and gave her the permission she wanted.

It was in the slack season or she might not have been so magnanimous, and, moreover, she was thankful to think she was not going to lose Daisy, whose services were very valuable.

Hubert Walsingham sat in his handsome room in the Temple with a note from Daisy before him on the table; its tone was cold and its words few—he was only informed that she would "call" and see him, as she had to come to town on a given day.

The day had come and he had given his orders for her admission when she made her appearance, he was not a man to be seen of all comers, indiscriminately, but this special young lady was to be sent in as soon as she arrived.

It was a beautiful day, the birds were twittering outside, and the sounds of the splashing fountain at the top of the steps could be distinctly heard.

It was a day made for the meeting of lovers, but not for evil thoughts and wicked passions. All nature seemed to be rejoicing, and he took it as a good omen that what he wanted would come to pass.

"At last," he said to himself, as a light foot sounded outside and a fresh young voice made itself heard through the half-open door.

"This way, miss, Mr. Walsingham will see you."

And Daisy tripped in, looking fresh and sweet as she always did, but paler and thinner than of yore.

The clerk shut the double doors and left them alone, and the lawyer sprang from his seat and would have folded the girl in his arms.

"At last, my darling," he said, "you have come to me, we will never be parted any more."

"Stop," she said, in a cold, hard voice, and he looked at her in amazement.

"What is it?" he asked, recoiling from her look and turning pale with an undefined dread.

"What has come between us, Daisy, my darling, my own now?"

"Your dead wife."

"Let her be," he said, "she is dead. That is enough; she cannot stand between us."

Still she would not let him touch her, as again he appealed to her.

"Daisy, what is it?"

"This."

She held out her hand to him as she spoke and there glittered in it the stud that the police had lost, the stud worn by the man who committed the murder in the church of St. Gudule.

"The only thing I ever gave you," she said, in a cold, cutting voice, "and you wore it when you lifted your hand against your innocent wife. It was you who committed that dastardly crime and you make me an accomplice because I cannot call in the hounds of the law and bid them work their will upon you. I have kept the secret for the love I had for you, and it is killing me."

"Good Heavens!"

The words fell from Hubert Walsingham's ashy lips like a moan and his face whitened as he looked at the young girl who stood there in front of him with the evidence of his guilt in her hand.

He had no word to say, no denial to bring for-

ward to her, and his head sank on his hands and he hid his face from her pure gaze.

She did not hear a slight sound behind her, nor did she, in her horror and indignation, notice that the door had softly opened and shut again.

"Heaven forgive you, Mr. Walsingham," she said, sadly, "my hand shall never be lifted against you."

"No, but mine will," and a man stepped forward out of the shadow and laid his hand on the lawyer's shoulder. "We have suspected this young lady knew something about the stud for some time, Mr. Walsingham, and we have kept a lookout after her. Here, take her, will you?" he added, as the clerk sprang forward just in time to save Daisy from falling to the ground, "and take care of her, poor thing; she seems to have suffered enough at this man's hands already."

The lawyer drew himself up and tried to look defiant. His eyes were stern and hard enough, but his lips quivered in spite of himself.

"I—I don't understand what you mean," he gasped.

"Oh, yes, you do. You are wanted for the murder of your wife. It was a clever business, but there are people as clever in the world as yourself."

"It is a lie, a base calumny. I was ill at the time; I was unable to move. The people of the house will tell you that."

"Had you not better reserve all you have to say for the magistrates?" the officer replied. "It will all go against you you know if you talk now."

Hubert Walsingham rose from his seat with something of dignity still left in him.

"I will go with you," he said. "Ah! surely that is not necessary?"

The officer had him by the wrist in a moment and the handcuffs clicked as he spoke.

"Everything is necessary when a determined man is in the case," he said. "You cannot put your hand in your pocket now, Mr. Walsingham, whatever you keep there."

The look that met him told him he had been right.

Had the hand he arrested drawn out what lay concealed in the lawyer's pocket either himself or his captor would have lain dead on the floor—probably both, for the pocket held a loaded revolver, which had been carried there ever since the murder, in readiness for anything less sudden and clever than this capture had been.

It was all very quietly done, and scarcely any one who saw the two cabs drive away from the Temple knew that the first contained the handcuffed murderer of poor Mrs. Walsingham and the second the girl who held the fatal evidence against him.

It was only when the evening papers came out that the news burst upon the town, and then people, of course, had suspected it all along, only they had not liked to say so.

All the miserable story was told now. The illness in the first place had been a sham to hide the fact of his having followed his wife to the church.

The people of the house were quiet, old-fashioned folks, who took but little heed of their lodger's comings and goings, and though they were ready to swear that he had not left the house and that his illness had gone on increasing all the evening, they were obliged to admit that he might have gone without their hearing him and returned too—as he had.

The immediate cause of the crime, which had been long premeditated and was only waiting for an opportunity, was the discovery that his wife had written the letter which had warned Daisy. She had fancied that she had destroyed the attempts she had made to disguise her hand, poor lady.

He had found them and they were her passport to the next world. The studs which he had worn at his wrists on that fatal night had been given him by Daisy Dalton—the only thing she had it in her power to give. They were of no intrinsic value and had been bought by her father years before for the sake of their quaintness and oddity in the Palais Royale.

No one knew anything about them and no one could identify them.

When the people of the lodgings got their lodger to bed on that memorable night they took plain gold studs out of his wristbands and were ready to swear they had never seen him wear any other, from the simple fact that they had never noticed what sort he did wear.

The police had not made such a mess of the affair after all. They had guessed at Daisy as the purloiner of the stud and had acted on their suspicions, but everything had been done so quietly and secretly that she had no idea that her actions were watched or even commented on.

Poor girl! There could be no more concealment for her now—she was obliged to appear and tell of the part she had played in the tragedy, but no one could affix the smallest blame to her except in the one fact of her not having made known her recognition of the stud. She gave her evidence at the trial in a calm, clear voice, and told all she knew of the man, who stood there waiting for the verdict of his countrymen; but she was taken away from the court fainting, and for a long while Madame Durand despaired of her life. The milliner proved herself a true friend to the friendless girl, and nursed her like a mother through the illness that supervened.

The last act in the tragedy had been played out long before Daisy recovered enough of reason to understand what had happened. They had taken Hubert Walsingham from the dock a condemned felon, with only a fortnight to live, and they had found him the next morning cold and stiff on his prison bed. Where he had carried the poison, which had done its deadly work swiftly and silently, no one could tell. He had it somewhere—in his mouth, they surmised, for the only sound that the watching warder heard from his charge was a slight snap, as if he had set his teeth suddenly and sharply.

He rose and looked at him, but the prisoner had pulled the bedclothes over his head and face, and seemed to be weeping—at least, the man judged so from the movements of his body. Presently he was still, and supposed to be asleep, but when he was touched in the morning he was cold and stiff, and about his mouth were the scattered fragments of a tiny glass bottle.

The scandal died away with the death of the murdered woman's assassin, and the crowds that thronged the church of St. Gudule thinned down to the ordinary congregation, and the world went on as before.

The story of the Walsingham Murder is an old one now. Other wives have been hated and killed since then, and other girls deluded and led away besides pretty Daisy Dalton. But not all have come out of the ordeal so entirely unscathed.

Daisy is a wife and a mother now, with pretty daughters of her own, and a good and loving husband who is as proud of his wife as a husband ought to be, and her passionate prayer for her girls is that she may be spared to them when they grow up, and they may never know what it is to face the temptation that so nearly wrecked her happiness when she was Madame Durand's work-girl.

THE BOY ASTRONOMER.

THE first transit of Venus ever seen by a human eye was predicted by a boy, and was observed by him just as he reached the age of manhood. His name was Jeremiah Horrox. He lived in an obscure village near Liverpool. He was a lover of books of science, and before he reached the age of eighteen he had mastered the astronomical knowledge of the day. He studied the problems of Kepler, and he made the discovery that the tables of Kepler indicated the nearness of the transit of Venus across the sun's centre. This was in the year 1635.

Often, on midsummer nights, Horrox was in the fields, watching the planet Venus. The desire sprang up within him to see the transit of this beautiful planet across the disc of the

sun, for it was a sight that no eyes had seen, and one that would tend to solve some of the greatest problems in astronomy. So the boy examined the astronomical tables of Kepler and endeavoured to find when the next transit would occur. He found an error in the tables, and he, being the first of all astronomers to make the precise calculation, discovered the exact date of the next transit. He told his secret to one intimate friend, a boy who, like himself, loved science. The young astronomer then awaited the event which he had predicted.

The memorable year came at last—1639. The predicted day of the transit came, too, at the end of the year. It was Sunday. It found Horrox, now just past twenty years of age, intently watching a sheet of paper, on which lay the sun's reflected image. Over this reflection of the sun's disc on the paper he expected to see the planet pass like a moving spot or shadow.

Suddenly the church-bells rang. He was a very religious youth, and was accustomed to heed the church-bell as a call from heaven. The paper still was spotless; no shadow broke the outer edge of the sun's luminous circle.

Still the bells rang. Should he go? A cloud might hide the sun before his return, and the expected disclosure be lost for a century. But Horrox said:

"I must not neglect the worship of the Creator to see the wonderful things the Creator has made."

So he left his room and went to the house of God.

When he returned from service the sun was still shining, and there, like a shadow on the bright circle of the paper, was the image of the planet Venus! It crept slowly along the bright circle, like the finger of the Invisible. Then the boy astronomer knew that the problems of astronomy were correct, and the thought filled his heart with religious joy.

Horrox died at the age of twenty-two. Nearly one hundred and thirty years afterwards, Venus again crossed the sun. The whole astronomical world was then interested in the event, and thousands witnessed the transit.

SO FAIR HER FACE.

CHAPTER IX.

SUMMONED.

"MASTER, Mr. Hartley, sir!"

The words roused Eustace Hartley from a doze into which he had fallen after he went into the library.

He had gone there intending to go to bed soon when his excitement had worn itself off a little, and after he had quieted himself sufficiently to sit down he had fallen asleep from very weariness; for the time had been long, and there had seemed a chance not many hours since that Doris would not live through her trouble.

The danger had gone by, and he had seen his wife and the son he had so ardently longed for; and he was conscious of the exhaustion that comes with excitement, and fell asleep almost without knowing it in his easy chair.

He roused himself with a start once, and laughed softly.

"I ought to go to bed," he said to himself. "I shall be fit for nothing to-morrow. I'm almost too tired to stir."

He fell into another doze, and was not conscious of the opening of the door, nor the entrance of someone with a tearful face and a scared look.

It was the housekeeper, who had come hastily from the sick-room in quest of him, and who delayed a moment before waking him, wringing her old hands and trembling as she looked upon his face.

"How shall I say it? How shall I tell him?" she murmured. "My poor, dear master."

Then she called his name, and he woke in an instant.

"What is it?" he asked, hurriedly. "Who wants me?"

He was not fully awake, and did not recognise her.

"Come, sir," was all she could say. "Come quick."

"What is wrong?"

"The mistress!" was all she could say.

She had meant to rouse him gradually, and break the news to him by instalments, as it were, but her agonised face betrayed her, and he started to his feet with a white, wild face.

"Why did they let me leave her?" he gasped as he rushed from the room.

"Gently, dear master, gently," she pleaded. And he calmed himself, and went more softly into the chamber he had left with such a joyful heart only a short hour before.

He knew what he should see, the knowledge had come to him intuitively in the first sound of her voice and the first look at her face.

Something was wrong with his wife, his darling, the woman he had schemed to win, and made a murderer of himself to get.

Surely, surely, Heaven was not going to be so cruel as to take her away from him.

One glance at the pale face lying back among the pillows was enough; no one could look into it and not see that the impress of another world was upon it.

The veil was lifted already, and the foot of the mother of only a few short hours was on the threshold of the mysterious realms within.

Doris seemed unconscious, her eyes were open, but they glittered with another light than that of earth, and the grey pallor was already settling on her features.

"Where is the doctor? What have you done?" he asked, wildly, bending over her in an agony too deep for words, but not daring to take her in his arms lest he should hasten the moment so near at hand by a single second.

"We have sent," the nurse replied, "but he will not be here in time."

"But what has happened? How comes she like this? She was so well just now."

There was nothing to be told.

The nurse had dropped asleep while the housekeeper watched for a little while. Mrs. Hartley was so well that they were quite satisfied about her, and the doctor had gone home saying that all was so well that his staying in the house would only tend to make his patient restless; he would be there as early as they liked in the morning.

There was no need of him and they were glad to let him go and settle down to a quiet night of rest, and the old housekeeper, with her tired legs up in a chair, sat and dozed and thought of all that had come and gone since that sunny summer day when the mills were blown up.

They had never been rebuilt, and she believed they never would be. Her master seemed to shudder at the mere mention of them and would never ride anywhere near the pretty valley that had been such a source of profit to him in the times that were gone.

She had found out by accident that all the money he had received for the contract from the Government for the powder that was so nearly all delivered, he had given away in charity, though it was no inconsiderable sum, and he was somewhat straitened at the time.

She could not quite understand his motive, but she set it down in her own mind to something of superstition, engendered by the prophecy abroad regarding his meeting his death by violence.

Then her thoughts went away to his marriage, which she had expected would turn out so badly and had been such a blessing to him.

Things had gone so smoothly since Doris had been mistress of the Grange, and Mr. Hartley had seemed so happy and so proud of his beautiful wife.

He had never been so gay as he used to be.

The awful accident had taken away his careless spirit and left him a somewhat thoughtful and grave man, caring for nothing but his home and his wife.

"Thank Heaven she is spared to him," the old

lady said to herself, as she looked towards the bed where Doris lay with her baby by her side.

She would have him there, though the nurse wanted to put him in the dainty little bassinette which stood by the bedside. They had humoured her, of course, she would sleep better for having her own way.

"He would die, I verily believe, if anything happened to her," she muttered, looking at the still figure on the bed, from which that moment to her horror there came a faint moan.

She sprang to her feet silently and bent over her mistress, appalled at the change that had come over her. Whatever the cause might be there was death in her face and the light of another world in the great, soft eyes that met hers so wistfully.

"I am dying—call them."

The words were hardly audible, but she understood them and roused the nurse with a touch.

"Yes," she said, awake in an instant and fully alive to all that was happening, "she's right, it's death—call the master—quick."

"But what is the matter with her?"

"God knows; I've seen the same thing once before. Go, there's no time to lose."

No time, indeed. The angel of death had her fast by the hand and was hurrying her on to the world of the great unknown with such rapid strides that she had hardly a word for her husband when he bent over her and wailed her name in a choking voice.

The sound seemed to bring her back for a moment, she looked in his face and smiled.

"Eustace?" she said.

"Darling, I am here."

"I have been so happy, it was too bright to last. Hold me close, it is dark, and—"

And this was all. What Eustace Hartley laid down on the pillow after that agonised clasp at the touch of the doctor's hand on his shoulder was not Doris, only the earthly shell that had held her pure, bright spirit. The river was passed and the veil had fallen once more between this world and the next.

They led him away to his own room, and Mr. Goodwin came and sat by him and talked gently to him and tried to win him out of the black despair that frightened them all, for they thought he would lay violent hands on himself in the intensity of his grief; and after a time he grew calmer.

They told him what had caused the death of his wife, how it was an insidious form of heart disease unsuspected by anyone and very likely not known to herself, which had seized upon the time of weakness and prostration to show itself. But he hardly heeded them. What was it to him what took her away? She was gone, and life would be a blank to him for evermore.

They laid her in the family vault amid the sorrowing lamentations of all who had known and learned to love her, and life went on as it does, no matter what sorrow or suffering is spread abroad in this lower world, and Eustace Hartley went his way amongst his fellow men once more, outwardly calm, but with the shadow of a great grief ever upon him.

One thing only seemed to bind him to life, and that was the child Doris had left behind, a feeble, fragile creature for whom there seemed from the first but little chance of life. From the time of its mother's death it pined, and every one but its father could see that its span of existence would only be at most a few months.

Eustace Hartley refused to believe it; he declared the baby was strong and would live, and planned all sorts of things for its future in a fashion that made Mr. Goodwin's heart ache when he heard him.

And so matters went on through spring and summer and the puny little heir still lingered and even the doctor began to predict that it was possible he might live; but the winter brought cold and chilling winds, and the little flower was nipped too keenly to recover. On his birthday, at almost the very hour in which his father had given such heartfelt thanks to Heaven for its mercy and his son's life, he stood by the side of his cot and watched him die.

He could not clasp him in his arms, the struggling breath was so difficult to draw, he

could only watch; and when the struggle was over and the little spirit free he shut himself up in his room and battled with his grief alone. He went about as usual and was not much more silent than he had been since his wife died. People said that the squire did not feel the loss of his child much. But those who knew him best knew that the streaks of grey in his dark hair were not there before that lonely agony in his shut-up room. And so with the death of the little heir the direct line of the Hartleys ended, for its father will never seek another wife, his heart lies buried with Doris and the baby who was taken away from him even as the child of Bathsheba was taken from David.

This was the story that the rector of Compton Royals told me concerning the ruined mill which I had taken for some old abbey as I rode past it in the morning. I saw the squire later on, a sad-eyed, sorrow-stricken man, who, though his sorrow was many years old now, would never again look into the face of a woman with love or clasp a little child to his breast with proud fondness. It seemed, indeed, as if the punishment of his sin of intent, if not of actual deed, had been swift and sure and as if the shock which sent the husband of Doris Calcott to the next world on wings of fire had, indeed, said to him in its fierce roar "Thou art the man."

[THE END.]

BRIDGED BY HIS LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"*Clytie Cranbourne*," "*The Golden Bowl*,"

"*Poor Loo*," "*Bound to the Trawl*,"

"*Fringed with Fire*," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON THE TRACK.

HARRY HARCOURT reached South Hall in a very depressed frame of mind.

In the race for position and wealth he had succeeded beyond his wildest expectations, but he was sick at heart in the midst of his triumph, and he repeated bitterly the plaint of Aurora Leigh:

If this then is success,
'Tis dismaller than any failure.

Of what use were his struggles?

His love had been true and strong and enduring enough to bridge the apparently impassable abyss that divided Rosalind's social condition from his own, and now when he thought his work was done he suddenly found that the bridge that he had built was too short, for a new chasm had opened beyond, and it seemed as though the difficulties that still lay before him were greater than all those which he had overcome.

His mother received him rapturously. To her there would never be a son like her first-born. Of him she felt she could be justly proud, for by his success he had seemed to reinstate her in the position which his father's thoughtless extravagance had forfeited.

By her marriage with Squire Vane she had herself substantially achieved this result, but she chose to close her eyes to that fact and to assume that she had always been her present husband's equal.

And he, good man, was very well pleased with his lot.

He almost worshiped his wife, he was very proud of his step-son Harry, but in his secret soul he believed that his own boy Dick would one day far outshine his half brother.

So it was quite a coming home for our hero. His mother hovered about him as though she feared he would be suddenly snatched from her sight.

Young Dick mounted on his knees and proceeded to make himself acquainted with the contents of his brother's pockets, and the squire sat by looking at "his two boys" with paternal admiration which he tried to hide beneath a futile attempt to talk politics.

Harry tried to throw off his melancholy, and he said nothing this first night of what brought him here.

He would not cloud the meeting with his mother by uttering the forebodings that oppressed him.

It was late the next morning when he rose, late at any rate according to the ways and customs of South Hall, and when he came down to breakfast he found that the squire had already gone out to inspect some work on the estate and had taken young Dick with him.

But his mother was waiting for him with all the luxuries upon the table which the establishment could provide, and with a bright fire burning on the hearth, for, though it was March and the sun shone brilliantly, the air was keen and sharp, and a fire was comfortable as well as cheerful.

Not until her son had made at least a pretence of eating his breakfast would Mrs. Vane talk to him, then she asked:

"And now how about Rosalind, poor girl?"

Then Harry unburdened his heart and told his mother Rosalind's decision and his own hopelessness either of inducing her to change her mind or of bringing Lord Bracknell's murderer to justice.

Mrs. Vane could offer but very little consolation in such a case as this.

She thought the girl was right, or at any rate she believed that she herself, under similar circumstances, would have acted in the same way, so she could only express her hopes that the detectives still at work on the matter would be successful.

But when Harry informed her of Lady Mabel Marmon's approaching marriage and of the awkward position in which the alliance would place Rosalind, Mrs. Vane said at once:

"There is always a home for Rosie with us if she can be satisfied with it; we are very fond of her for her own sake, and she is dearer to me still for yours; I will write to her and tell her so without delay."

By this time they had risen from table and had both walked towards the window.

This window commanded a view of a large flower garden and in it two women were at work picking up weeds and stones.

It is not an unusual thing in Sammerses for one or two and sometimes three or four women to be thus employed by the owners of farms, in helping to do some of the lighter kinds of field work.

These women are usually old or middle-aged and are the wives or widows of the regularly employed farm labourers.

Harry scarcely looked at and certainly did not recognise the faces of the women, but he watched them at their slow, monotonous task, just as one watches, in a kind of mechanical way, the movements of a spider or a fly, while one's heart and brain alike are filled with troubled thought.

In this way mother and son stood silently looking out at the prospect before them.

She looking far away from the garden and over the fields and wondering if her husband had taken sufficient precautions in wrapping up little Dick's throat.

And he, watching the women at their work, thinking what a miserable state of existence theirs must be, and coming to the conclusion that in spite of all that was against them he and Rosie had still much to be thankful for.

One of these two women interested him far more than the other, though why he could not tell.

She was the older of the two.

Her face seemed in a measure familiar, though he could not say where he had seen it before.

It was not a face to be remembered with pleasure by any one.

Never, even in its youth, had it been comely, and now it was seamed with furrows and

wrinkles and hardened, sunburnt and freckled till it was positively ugly to look upon.

Passion also had had its share in marring this "human face divine" and had left its seal upon it.

Thus the young man speculated on the life of its owner, until, as he watched her, the woman became convulsed with a violent fit of coughing and sneezing, and she pulled out from her pocket a large coloured cotton handkerchief and with it something that flashed brilliantly in the sunlight as it fell.

The woman must have been conscious of having dropped it, for she speedily repressed her coughing and searched anxiously amongst the grass and weeds, and in a few seconds Harry saw her pick up the glittering thing and rub it on her dress.

She then looked about her suspiciously, and, satisfied that she was not observed, she slipped her treasure upon her finger and held out her great, coarse hand to admire the effect.

Then Harry Harcourt was able to see that what had fallen from the woman's pocket was a ring. A valuable ring too, if that stone set in it was a diamond, and surely nothing but a diamond could flash so splendidly.

But he controlled his astonishment.

He saw the woman press the pure gem to her coarse lips, and then, with evident reluctance, return it to her pocket.

She still stood, however, with the handkerchief in her hand, doing nothing.

"That lazy creature Martha Milstead is here again," Harry heard his mother exclaim, with some irritation. "Just look at her," Mrs. Vane went on, "she spends more than half of her time in idling, she is dirty and saucy, and yet Mr. Vane will employ her and will let her have her husband's cottage to live in. But I suppose I was first to blame for that."

"Milstead!" repeated Harry, the woman's name coming upon him as a kind of revelation.

"Yes," returned his mother, pointing to the same woman, who, doing nothing herself, had also induced her companion to pause in her work.

"Who is she?" asked Harry. "I seem to have some recollection of the name. Hadn't she a son when I was a boy?"

"Yes, and she has him still—a bright youth he is too. He went away, let me see, it must be seven years ago, before Rosie was taken away from us, and just before Mrs. Vane died. His mother heard nothing of him until a few months ago, when he came back with as little ceremony as he went. He is living in her cottage now, looking for a situation he says, and doing odd bits of work when he can get it to do."

"How long has he been back?" asked Harry, with repressed eagerness.

"I don't quite know; two or three months, I should think, but I have never seen the fellow."

At this moment a servant came to ask Mrs. Vane a question, the answer to which necessitated her leaving Harry alone.

He sat down on the nearest chair for a few seconds and holding his head in his two hands he tried to fix his thoughts, for he felt not a little confused by the suddenness of the discovery of what might, perhaps, be a clue to the Bracknell mystery.

It was not an elegant position, but the result of his cogitations seemed satisfactory, for at length he rose to his feet with a more resolute and hopeful expression of countenance than he had worn for a long time, and, seeking his mother, he asked if he could have a dog-cart or a good horse to take him to Cotelworth.

His request was at once complied with, the dog-cart was got ready, and half an hour later he was driving along at a rapid pace to the market town.

"Who is that fellow?" he asked the man in livery who sat by his side, and who seemed to recognise a spindle-legged, dissipated, ill-looking young man who touched his forehead as they passed.

"That's Ned Milstead, sir," was the reply.

"Ah, is it? I used to know him when I was a boy."

"Yes together then, but He's a nothing his mother be like spend a does. shilling Harry After than just reward So a Milstead last at office. His through enough if proceed belman It w Yard, a "Co with y found. Whe again t summon The convinc agains plete. The the floor placed lind, v assess Her and this watch Only with h Rosalind mond could Lord fatal d He on. The he was able to He make If derer him a loved He men breath they witho that guise the d ingly lind Th The police good feath Ha and i and the her t T and So and he h W orre aske Ou serv

"Yes, Mister Harry; you once had a fight together, I mind, and you got the worst of it then, but that wouldn't be the case now, I reckon. He's a bad lot is that Ned Milstead, a good-for-nothing lot; he don't try to work, but lives on his mother's earnings, though her earnings can't be like them of most women folk, or he couldn't spend so much at the 'Green Grapes' as he does. I heard last week that he spent five shillings there in one night."

Harry listened to all, but made no comment.

After all, Rosalind's suspicions seemed more than justified, and if this were so then his own reward could not be far distant.

So after listening to more stories of Ned Milstead's iniquities he reaches Othelworth at last and betakes himself to the telegraph office.

His message, when written out and flashed through space seemed simple and harmless enough, and would have occasioned no surprise if proclaimed aloud at every street corner by the bellman.

It was addressed to Mr. Behenna, Scotland Yard, and the words simply ran:

"Come down without delay and bring a friend with you. What was sought is I believe found."

When this was despatched Harry drove back again to South Hall to await the answer to his summons.

The more he thought the matter over the more convinced he was that the train of evidence against Ned Milstead and his mother was complete.

The finding of Lord Bracknell's watch in the flower-pot at South Hall, though evidently placed there with a view of incriminating Rosalind, was the first clue to the murdered peer's assassin.

Here was some of Lord Bracknell's property and the rest could not be far distant.

This is what many people had said when the watch was found, but he had doubted it.

Only this morning, however, he had seen with his own eyes the mother of the man whom Rosalind suspected in actual possession of a diamond ring which corresponded as nearly as he could judge in the distance with the ring which Lord Bracknell was known to have worn on that fatal day.

He thought of all this as the hours were slowly on.

The squire found him a dull companion, for he was too excited to eat and too nervous to be able to talk on indifferent subjects.

He had this matter too much at heart to make it one of mere criminal hunting.

If he could but find Lord Bracknell's murderer the world would be altogether changed to him and to the girl he loved far better than he loved his own life.

He had told his mother that he expected two men from town on business, but he did not breathe a word to her of the mission upon which they were coming, and it was not, therefore, without a feeling of anger and consternation that Mrs. Vane recognised (in spite of the disguise he had assumed) one of the two men as the detective who had made himself so exceedingly objectionable in his inquiries about Rosalind when that unlucky watch was discovered.

The second man might be a detective or a policeman, but it was quite certain to the good lady's mind that they were "birds of a feather."

Harry saw that his mother recognised Behenna, and knowing he must keep her silent for a time, and thinking she might be able to help him and the men by some practical suggestion, he begged her to join the conference.

The squire was taking his after-dinner nap, and was safe for a time at least.

So Mrs. Vane somewhat reluctantly complied, and then Harry began to state what he believed he had discovered.

We need not follow the discussion that ensued, or repeat the many questions which Mr. Behenna asked or the answers they elicited.

Out of it all certain points appeared clear, A servant had been severely punished by Lord

Bracknell and dismissed by him. This man had been heard to utter threats against his master, and that master soon after met with a violent death.

Very shortly after this the discharged servant appeared in his native place, a part of the country distant from where the crime was committed, and here without any apparent means of subsistence he had lived for nearly three months with his mother, who was clearly unable to support him.

But all this would have counted as nothing but for the finding of the watch in Rosalind's room, which Mrs. Vane now remembered she had ordered Martha Milstead to scrub out after the young lady had gone away; and, what was to Harry more conclusive still, the possession by the old woman of that suspicious-looking diamond ring.

"Then we'll pay Mr. Ned Milstead a visit," remarked Mr. Behenna, in a cool, professional tone. "I suppose he won't be gone to bed by this time?"

And he looked at his watch, which pointed to eight o'clock.

"No," said Mrs. Vane, "they won't be gone to bed for another hour. You can go across the fields and along the bottom of the orchard, and so get to the cottage without being observed by anyone."

"I will go with you," said Harry, decisively.

His mother looked at him anxiously as she said:

"Suppose he is armed?"

"Well, we are armed, also, ma'am," said the detective, calmly, "and Mr. Harcourt, perhaps, had better take a revolver with him. But we shan't have a fight. If the man is innocent he won't fear us, and if he's guilty he'll be too upset to make any resistance. It's the old woman that may give us trouble. But we must manage to come upon them unawares. Now, sir, if you're ready we'll start."

And thus the three men left the house, while Mrs. Vane's anxiety was so great that she was more than half tempted to follow them.

The night was very dark. The bright morning had been succeeded by a wet afternoon, and though the rain had ceased a heavy, fog-like mist hung over the valleys and made anyone who had the least regard for comfort prefer a warm fireside to being exposed to the chilling atmosphere.

This was Mr. Behenna's own sentiment, and he almost anathematised Ned Milstead for being the cause of this wretched walk through the mud and the long wet grass.

At length he and his companions reached the small strip of garden attached to Martha Milstead's cottage.

"You stop here," he said, in a low tone, to the others. "When I knock at the door come behind me quickly."

Harry and the other man made no verbal reply, but they obeyed, and Behenna crept like a sleuthhound to the window of the cottage, which, though covered with a shutter, still let a faint light shine through the chinks.

To the largest of these small apertures the detective applied his eye, and this is what he saw.

Martha Milstead and her son were sitting at a table with the tallow candle shining on their faces.

The couple were dressed for a journey. Not attired in ordinary work-a-day clothes, but in what might be regarded as their "Sunday best."

Two bundles lay ready tied up to be carried away with them, and there was an air of desolation about the room as though its present occupants had stripped it of all that made it look home-like, and were going away for good.

Mother and son were evidently discussing their plans, and part of what they said could be heard by the man who was watching them.

Perhaps they were waiting until the night should be far enough advanced for them to get out of the neighbourhood unobserved and unsuspected.

"I wish I'd gone away before," Ned was say-

ing, in a grumbling tone, "I didn't know it was so easy to take a passage for you and me to Cape Colony. I just giv the notes and they took 'em like one o'clock and giv me the receipt, and we'll have gold enough not to run any risks by passing paper where we may be found out."

"But how much gold does it all mean, Ned?" asked his mother, in a whining tone, as she leaned over towards her son, who had Lord Bracknell's open pocket-book before him, with a roll of bank notes which he was counting over greedily.

"Never you mind," was the surly reply; "there's enough to help us along at the diamond fields if we're careful. But I tell you what it is, mother, I'll do you a mischief, I know I will, if you flash that ring in my face as you do. It brings back his cursed face to me; it makes me remember it all, as if I was doing it all over again, and—and 'twill send me mad I tell you."

And he sprang to his feet and flung his arms out wildly in a paroxysm of uncontrollable terror.

The next instant there was a thundering rap at the door, then it was violently burst open.

Behenna had seen and heard enough, also he had arrived just in time—an hour later and the birds would have flown.

(To be Continued.)

AN INSTRUMENT FOR COUNTING REVOLUTIONS OF MACHINERY.—A new and simple instrument for counting the revolutions of a shaft has been brought out by Messrs. Siemens and Halske. Its peculiarity is that it only gives the units of a numbered disc, while the tens are observed by means of a little pin in the instrument producing pressure on the finger of the observer placed on it, the pin being thrust out every ten revolutions.

RICE AS FOOD.—During warm weather, when children suffer so much with heat and its attendant diseases, it is well to know the excellence of rice as an article of diet. Few articles are more nutritious, bland and palatable. It can be prepared in a variety of ways without impairment of its nutritive value or its acceptability to the most delicate stomach. The percentage of starch which it contains renders it a most efficacious remedy in intestinal disturbances of children, allaying irritation and exerting a decidedly stringent local effect. Thus in rice we have most nutritious food and physic combined, and its free use as a diet during the summer months cannot be too highly recommended.

SHADE TREES.—The maple is one of the best shade trees for city growth. It is not affected a particle by the extremes of heat and cold. It forms a beautiful head, with clean, glossy foliage, smooth bark, is free from all insects, and has a rapid growth. In five years, in a good soil, it makes a fine, symmetrical head, with gracefully sweeping branches, and affords a dense shade. The American tulip-tree is also very choice. Its great elegance of habit, and striking beauty of leaf and blossoms, recommend it to any one who has an eye to fine proportions. It requires a deep soil, with plenty of room to expand freely on all sides. It will not bear removing when large; but small trees grow rapidly when transplanted into a deep soil.

SOOT.—Soot is used in various ways. Owing to the amount of sulphate of ammonia it contains, soot used to be exported in considerable quantities to the West India sugar plantations, and it is still a valuable manure at home. Sheep and cattle feed greedily on pasture that soot has fertilised, and it imparts a remarkably bright green to grass and grain. From it, moreover, bistre is manufactured, and colouring matter for paper-hangings. Like pyroligneous acid, it has been used for the curing of meat, and with a similar effect—the imparting to the preserved provision a taste as if it had been smoked. The best soot is said to be that swept from kitchen chimneys, and well impregnated with hospitable fumes.



[DETECTED.]

A TALE FROM TWO PENS.

"LETTER for you!" and the postman tossed me the article mentioned and was gone from my view.

It was a hot sultry summer afternoon, and I reached over for it from where I was couched, en deshabille, in reckless comfort, on five chairs. What could it be? A dun from my wine-merchant, for those sparkling boxes of Moselle, most likely. With an effort I appropriated it and glanced at the postmark. Hallo! Rutlandshire. Who knew me there? Nobody that I knew, as far as I could remember. But then my memory was not brilliant that hot day.

I tore it open, remarked the stiffness and good quality of the paper and the energy of its appearance in point of size and style. You can tell a man from the paper and envelopes he uses, to a certain extent. The handwriting was manly, bold, characteristic—that of a man who writes pleasingly, but to the point. The contents were the following:

"JOHN HOLMES, Esq.,—Dear Sir,—Being in need of the professional services of a detective, I address you, at the recommendation of my friend, Squire Beekman, to aid me in the detection of an ingenious rascal. It appears that at different times small sums of money have become missing from my own, my wife's, and my children's pocket-books, from my safe, my bureau,

and otherwheres; sums insignificant in themselves, but now adding up to a considerable sum in toto. Other little valuables have also become missing. I am at a loss to know what to do. My servants appear faithful and honest. I hardly know whom to suspect in the matter. My wits are at an end. What shall I do? An immediate reply will greatly oblige—Yours respectfully, "J. WILLIAM LOUTREL."

As will be seen from this epistle, I am by profession a detective, and I was seated, at the time of this receipt, in my little six-by-ten office in the third storey of a London office building. My business was very modest, that is in extent and in prospect, and my sign, "John Holmes, Private Detective," had been in its place alongside of my office door unnoticed for a good while. I had been speculating long and in vain how to make both ends meet to the effect of living the life of a gentleman at ease.

My apparel was beginning to show unmistakable signs of approaching decay, and the wherewithal for its renewal never dawned on the horizon of my professional experience until this day.

A year ago I had performed a slight service for one Squire Beekman which had brought me in fifty pounds, and I now sat penniless and alone in my glory, my rent unpaid for the last two months, accompanied by renewed threats of expulsion, with not a penny in my pocket to provide for the exigencies of an approaching appetite.

But things had not always been thus; there

was a time when I could luxuriate in sparkling Moselle and Reina Victorias, rendered possible by a modest legacy left me by the death of my paternal ancestor; those golden days of Aranjuez had become a dream of the past now, especially as several outstanding bills were still unpaid.

And here at last was an opening. Visions of Moselle and Victorias once more dawned upon me. Eagerly I kicked all but one chair away from my desk, added a little water to the sediment in my inkstand, and proceeded to indite the following reply:

"J. WILLIAM LOUTREL, Esq., Honoured Sir,—Your favour of yesterday has been duly received and contents carefully noted. I infer from the same that you are more interested in the detection of the thief than in the recovery of the articles purloined. If such is the case, the possible expense attendant upon this detection would be perhaps more warranted. My advice is that you introduce me down at your house as a business friend from London, to spend a week or so with you to talk over certain matters connected with a speculation, or whatever you like; I shall then have an opportunity to see for myself, acquaint myself with all the circumstances, and study the characters of your servants and attachés with a view of detecting the rascal. If this is satisfactory to yourself, and our views coincide, please let me hear from you to that effect at as early a date as possible and oblige
Your most obedient servant,
"JOHN HOLMES."

This epistle, having borrowed an envelope and a stamp from an obliging neighbour, I posted immediately, and then resigned myself to dreams of a future made happy by sparkling and smoky surroundings. The prospects of a princely sojourn at the residence of a wealthy country magnate were also cheering in the extreme, so that I had every reason to congratulate myself on an unclouded future. Besides, if Mr. Loutrel had a daughter, I prided myself on my ability to do something in that direction. The only thing that troubled me was where the money to go to Oakham was to come from, in case Mr. Loutrel should see fit to enter upon my views. My wardrobe, as regards collars, cuffs, &c., was also in rather a precarious condition, but I determined to await the reply and trust to good fortune for the rest.

Forty-eight hours of expectancy followed, and then came the desired reply. I tore the letter open; out fell a note! Oh, happiness! I picked it up; it was a fiver. Fondly I glanced at it, folded it up carefully, and deposited it in my vest pocket. I felt royally rich. No need to trouble myself about collars and cuffs and railway tickets now. I then turned to the letter, which read to wit:

"JOHN HOLMES, Esq.,—My Dear Sir,—Your favour of yesterday duly at hand. Your suggestion is good, and meets with my approval to the letter. I enclose a note to defray immediate expenses of your coming on. I shall expect you within the next two days, and hope your business will permit you to absent yourself from London long enough to carry this matter to a successful termination.—I beg to remain yours very truly,
"J. WILLIAM LOUTREL."

In a tremor of delight I replied that I would be down on the following day; that I had just happily concluded a difficult case, and would be at leisure for a few weeks; that I had hopes of being as successful in this case as I had been in past cases, and begged to assure him of my best regards and most respectful consideration.

The banknote aforementioned went towards an inexpensive valise and an abundance of collars, cuffs, kerchiefs, silk and otherwise, etc. I paid my debts to the lender of envelopes and postage-stamps, and then, equipped for the coming fray, a cigar between my teeth and a pair of lavender gloves on my hands, I stepped in the train and ensconced myself comfortably on a seat in a smoking carriage.

Presently the carriage began to fill up, and I

got a fellow-passenger beside me, armed, like myself, with a weed.

I didn't take much notice of him for a while, but buried myself in the columns of a newspaper until the guard came, to look at our tickets.

I then noticed that Oakham was the terminus of the journey of the participator of my lounge, as well as of my own, and my interest in his immediate destiny was heightened.

He was a medium-sized, broad-shouldered, well-shaped and not bad-looking young man of some twenty-five or seven years of age, dressed fashionably but not flashily.

His face had an intellectual look about it, a poetic style; the eye a blue one, full of pathos and sympathy; his whole appearance had something romantic about it, and I fancied he wouldn't make a bad hero for a novel or a play.

"Fine day, sir," I remarked, by way of starting up his acquaintance.

He gave me a quick but not startled look.

"Yes," he replied, slowly, as if collecting his senses after an extended reverie.

"I see that we are bound for the same town," I continued.

"Yes."

This half indifferently, half surprisedly.

"Perhaps you are a resident there, sir," I went on.

"Yes, I am."

He didn't seem to want to shake me off, and yet didn't give me much encouragement.

"As I am a stranger there perhaps you can render me an essential service," I ventured on with.

"I shall be most happy to do so, sir," he replied to this. "What might it consist in, if I may ask?"

"I am in search of the residence of Mr. Loutrel," I began.

"Loutrel!" he exclaimed. "Why, that is just where I am bound for; we can go there together, it is not far from the town, and Mr. Loutrel's carriage will await us at the station."

"Ah, indeed?"

I didn't say any more, but gave him a scrutinising glance; the man had something undefinable about him that prompted me to study him earnestly.

What could his mission be? Had Mr. Loutrel engaged another beside myself in this business, and was this the man?

I determined to satisfy myself on this point immediately.

"You came from London, sir?" I asked, thinking his residence near Oakham might only be temporary, like my own.

"Yes, on an errand. I am James Stratton, Mr. Loutrel's secretary."

I had my answer, and was satisfied; here was a man whom it was my business to make myself thoroughly acquainted with.

"Ah, you don't say so! Allow me to introduce myself, then, as I anticipate a prolonged stay at Mr. Loutrel's, and we shall be able to cultivate a better acquaintance. My name is Francis McCullough" (I had given this name to Mr. Loutrel in my last letter as my pseudonym); "perhaps you have heard him speak of me."

"He did mention something to me about a gentleman by that name coming down to see him," replied Stratton.

And then the conversation went on freely, dealing with the beauties of Rutlandshire and the adjacent parts.

I had an opportunity, during its course, of ascertaining that the Loutrel family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Loutrel, two grown sons, one about twenty-one and the other fifteen, two daughters of sixteen and seventeen respectively, a youngson and daughter, one elder son being away at Oxford, the first two going to Harrow.

To be brief, we arrived at Mr. Loutrel's estate about three in the afternoon. It covered considerable ground, well kept; one corner at the intersection of two country avenues being occupied by the elegant mansion.

Mr. Loutrel was at home, and received me in his study.

He was a man in the prime of life, well kept and bearded, hardly aristocratic in appearance, and certainly not very assuming; a plain, mild man in a general way, but at the same time determined, and not to be easily gotten the better of.

"You are Mr. Holmes?" he remarked, interrogatively, as I entered.

I nodded.

He motioned me to be seated, inquired after my personal comfort, tinkled a little silver bell, and then sat down opposite me to subject me to a long and careful scrutiny.

I read the result of his ocular catechism in his eyes.

"You think me a little flashier, bolder, and coarser in appearance than you anticipated," I said, quietly, "but do not judge me by my manners. I come among some queer people in my career, and it is said that nobody escapes low associations unscathed."

He seemed to like me better after this speech, and assumed a heartier manner toward me.

Then a servant entered in answer to his bell-call.

"Bring my cigars," said Mr. Loutrel, briefly. No need of asking me if I smoked, you can tell the habitual smoker.

The cigars came, they were very good. I feasted on mine with infinite delight.

"I am a temperance man," remarked Mr. Loutrel, giving me a sharp glance, "but I am desirous to do justice to the tastes and habits of my visitors; a man in your position drinks a little, I suppose; what can I offer? I have some fine Madeira, so they tell me—"

"Ah, thank you, sir, you are too kind," I dropped in, obsequiously. "I will venture—ah—h'm."

The servant understood me, disappeared and reappeared with a bottle.

He opened the same and poured me out a glass of the clear liquid. I raised the glass to my lips, toasting to the success of my mission, and half drained it.

Mr. Loutrel said nothing. Inwardly refreshed I now turned toward my new patron and awaited what he had to say.

"Mr. Stratton, I hear," he began, "has already acquainted you with the number and character of the residents of this house, and it will therefore be unnecessary for me to comment on them. You will meet them all at the table later. I meant to have said a great deal of the merits of the case to you before your work was begun, but I thought it best not to disturb you with my ideas, but to let you build up your own theory. I suppose that is satisfactory?"

I nodded.

"How long has Mr. Stratton been connected with your household?" I queried.

"Little better than a year," was the reply.

"How did you fall in with him?"

"Through an advertisement."

"His references were good?"

"Very; he was a book-keeper at the Griffin Life Insurance Company."

"Did he assign any reason for leaving there?"

"None in particular; he was being overworked, so he said, he wanted to get out into the country, he was tired of the city; he desired a quiet life."

Mr. Loutrel had evidently made up his mind to answer any question I chose to ask, without demanding a reason for such questioning, as so many others would have done in his place.

There was a silence of a minute or so and then I went on:

"You needn't answer the question I propose asking if you don't feel inclined."

"I shall answer it at my discretion," was the quiet rejoinder.

He was prepared for anything.

"Does Mr. Stratton seem inclined to pay attention to either of your daughters?"

Mr. Loutrel looked at me with some astonishment, and was about to counter-query me, but checked himself, and after some hesitation, replied:

"If he does, I don't know it."

"Is he in the habit of making small presents,

even flowers, or perhaps books or little trinkets, etcetera?"

"Occasionally he does that, but not often enough to warrant a second thought on that point."

"Does he go out much?"

"Very seldom; in fact, never."

"Has he any particular hobby?"

"None that I know of, unless that he is an ardent smoker."

"Does he have to pay for the cigars he smokes?"

Mr. Loutrel shook his head, and made a gesture signifying that his cigars were at the service of his attachés and guests. (They were very good; so was his Madeira.)

There was another silence, and then I resumed:

"Your servants consist of—"

"Of three girls, a cook, a valet, and a map-of-all-work, besides a gardener, a coachman, and a stablekeeper. Besides these and the governess, there is nobody but my family—"

"The governess, who is she?"

"A Mrs. Claxton."

"Old or young?"

"About forty, I suppose."

"Where did she come from?"

"She was a teacher of French and German in an educational institution in London, and left there for pretty much the same reasons that Mr. Stratton left his clerkship."

This finished our conversation, there being a knock at the door, and upon a "Come in" from Mr. Loutrel a lady entered, whom I rightly judged to be Mrs. Claxton. She was a tall, sinewy, determined-looking woman, sharp, intelligent, and commanding. She looked almost too shrewd to be prepossessing.

Her business with Mr. Loutrel referred to some books she desired to have purchased, and when that was over I was introduced to her. I didn't much like her; and I don't think I am far from right when I say that she didn't like me either.

Later, at the table, I made the acquaintance of the remaining members of the principal part of the household. I found Mrs. Loutrel to be a pleasant, portly matron, full of good feeling and hospitality. The girls were pleasant and not bad-looking, bursting with health—rustic beauties, as the world goes, with a good solid education, but wanting the society breeding of a London belle.

It was refreshing to look at them. The elder son was an earnest, austere young man, who looked as if he and the world were having a hard intellectual "tussle," and he was going to get the better of it. The younger son was a mischievous lad, very much like his sister in looks.

Then I turned my eyes upon the two girls who waited upon us; they were both Irish and looked honest.

My experience told me they were out of the question. The valet, whom I saw later, was more doubtful.

Here was a problem. But it did not stagger me; the longer it took to solve the better for me.

After supper there was a chat with the family for a quarter of an hour, and then I went to my room for a smoke.

I had hardly finished my cigar, and had but just collected my thoughts for a prolonged "think," when there was a hurried knock at my door.

The summoner proved to be the youngest son.

"Mr. Holmes, my father desires to see you in his study immediately."

Something was the matter. I was in the study that same minute. As I entered Mr. Loutrel met me with:

"Just this moment my wife missed a jewel which she positively declares was in its place before dinner. It is a stone worth a fortune—an heirloom. This is terrible! What shall I do? Tell me—advise me."

"Keep cool," I replied, laconically. "Where was the jewel?"

"In my wife's boudoir."

"May I go in there?"

"Certainly. This way."

And Mr. Loutrel somewhat excitedly led the way to the apartment indicated, where we encountered Mrs. Loutrel and the girls in a high state of trepidation.

It appeared that the diamond had lain exposed in an open case in a small drawer in his wife's bureau.

Who could have taken it?

Answer: Sarah, one of the girls; the valet; the gardener.

No others were in the house at the time except the cook, who didn't leave the kitchen. But then I remembered that both Mr. Stratton and Mrs. Claxton were late enough at the table—but never mind.

I looked about the boudoir and its approaches very carefully.

Both the persons mentioned had to pass it in order to get to the dining-room.

"Well?" queried Mrs. Loutrel, breathlessly, when I had finished my examination.

"Don't say anything about this to anybody," I said, finally; and then turning to Mr. Loutrel, "Will you permit me to occupy your study this evening, and let nobody be admitted unless by my permission?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Loutrel, unhesitatingly.

He evidently desired to give me all the opportunity I wanted.

Accordingly I made myself comfortable in his study, and after some reflection I desired Sarah, the servant girl, to be summoned into my presence.

She came, trembling like an aspen leaf. I assumed a stern demeanour.

"Your name is—"

"Oh! please, sir, I—I—" and then she began to cry.

"There, there! What's your name?"

"Sarah Malone, sir."

"How long have you been in this house?"

"Four months and a week to-morrow."

"How do you like your place?"

"Oh, sir—boo-hoo!—ye aren't agoing to send me off?"

"No, of course not. What are you afraid of?"

"Oh, nothing, sir," she hesitatingly replied, and then she brightened up at the thought that she had actually nothing to be afraid of.

I smilingly dismissed her; she was not the culprit; poor girl, she wouldn't have the pluck to steal a pin.

I then called for the valet. He was a Frenchman; I didn't much like his looks.

He submitted to my questions like one who is used to being under suspicion.

"Your name," I began, sharply.

"Louis Latour."

"How long have you been in this house?"

"About three months."

"Where were you before you came here?"

"With Mons. De Brascales, London."

"How did you come to leave there?"

"They broke up housekeeping on the death of his wife, and returned to France."

"Where were you at half-past five this afternoon?"

At that hour Mrs. Loutrel had left her room.

"In the library, dusting the figures."

"Where did you go then?"

"Into the garden, to chat with Laurence, the gardener."

"When did you come back into the house?"

"About half an hour ago, and then I had my supper."

"And Laurence had his also?"

"Yes, sir; I just barely got through with my supper when I was called."

A pause, and then I recommenced.

"You are a good Catholic?"

Louis nodded, in some surprise.

"Do you understand the nature of an oath?"

He nodded again.

"Can you swear to what you have just said?"

He nodded a third time, and made good his word. I made up my mind that the man was sincere. I let him off.

There was no necessity of calling the gar-

dener. After some thought I called for Mrs. Claxton.

She came; she looked haughty, as if she resented the summons; she appeared defiant.

"I am a Londoner, madame," I began, "as you have probably heard. The name of McCullough is not unknown in commercial circles."

She deigned me no reply.

"I have lived there for many years, and have seen some vicissitudes. In 1864 I had a partner by the name of Claxton."

I paused; no effect on Mrs. Claxton. I went on:

"Claxton, who I am sorry to say absconded with a considerable sum, leaving a wife behind him without any means of support; so she was obliged to take to teaching, and as she was an accomplished and well-educated woman succeeded at her calling. I ask you, are you that Mrs. Claxton?"

My story was a deliberate fabrication, but I had to break the ice somehow.

"No, sir!" she replied, emphatically.

"So I thought," I said, dryly.

My speech and manner confused her.

"You were unwell just before dinner?" I added, quickly.

"Why so?" she stammered.

"You were late at the table." And I fixed my eyes full upon hers.

"What do you mean?" she said.

"I am not Mr. McCullough, the merchant, but a detective!" I exclaimed, "and I know all."

She gave a little cry, and then sank back in her chair, and began to sob hysterically.

"You will not prosecute me?" came from the handkerchief covering her face. "I will restore all and go."

"All?"

She arose impetuously and took me by the hand.

"You will come to my room with me?"

I nodded, and she led me to her room, and there, to my professional astonishment and delight, she produced a variety of small articles which had been missed. She mutely extended them.

"Is this all?" I demanded, sternly.

At this moment the door opened and Mr. Loutrel entered. Mrs. Claxton quailed before him, and replied, very feebly, that it was all.

"Where's the diamond?" questioned Mr. Loutrel, hoarsely.

"The diamond? What diamond?" And Mrs. Claxton gave him an amazed look.

"The diamond you stole in my wife's boudoir this evening?"

"The diamond I stole? Great Heavens! I didn't steal any diamond. I've not been in your wife's boudoir this day." And she looked as if she spoke the truth.

"Search the room," I suggested. "Call the servants in."

They were called.

"You will search this woman," I commanded, and we retired, after having hinted at the object of our search.

This search too was in vain.

"You are now released," said Mr. Loutrel to her; "here is a ten-pound note—you see I am not hard on you. But you will have to leave the house within twenty-four hours."

Mrs. Claxton was not a bad woman, she was very sorry for what she had done. She didn't take the cheque; with tears in her eyes she begged Mr. Loutrel's forgiveness, and departed that same night. I've heard from her since, she was doing well.

There was now but one person left, to my mind, who could have stolen the diamond, and that was James Stratton.

I didn't ask him to see me; I went to see him, I wasn't in a hurry to ask him any vital questions. I contented myself with ingratiating myself into his favour.

I liked him very well, and more so the more I saw of him; he was a little eccentric, it is true, but a frank, merry soul, of excellent morals and habits.

It was hard to suspect him.

But one day I caught him hastily shutting a

small drawer in his room as I entered, and he coloured to the roots of his hair.

I pretended not to have noticed anything, but still was determined to sift this matter. He had not locked the drawer.

He was reassured.

"Mr. Loutrel desires to see you immediately in the library, about binding those magazines," I said.

This was a prevarication, to use a mild expression.

But it was effectual as the truth. Stratton went.

I jerked the drawer open, its sole contents was a sheet of paper.

I glanced at it; it was headed "My dear James," and was signed "Your Minnie."

Minnie was the eldest Miss Loutrel. I shut the drawer impatiently. At this instant Stratton returned.

"I couldn't find Mr. Loutrel," he said, eyeing me inquiringly.

"So I thought," said I, coolly, and made my exit.

The man must have thought I was crazy, judging from the way he looked after me.

Oho! Here was a nice state of affairs. Stratton and Miss Minnie having a romance! That in itself was none of my business.

But it had this bearing on my case: if he loved Mr. Loutrel's daughter, would he commit a theft in the house? Most likely not. This was in his favour.

Well, I stayed with the Loutrels three weeks, and then I confessed to Mr. Loutrel that I was beaten.

I explained from a hundred little circumstances which I had noted that Stratton wasn't the thief, and also stated my reasons for believing the others entirely innocent.

Mr. Loutrel was sorry to hear of my failure, but commended me for the earnestness with which I had worked, and also for my partial success as regarded Mrs. Claxton.

He came down very liberally, the cheque reading three figures, and after making my adieux to the family I departed for London, and there established myself as monarch of all I surveyed in my office (I paid my rent) with unlimited sparkling Moselle and Reims Victorias.

I present this case which I have just narrated to the consideration of a discriminating public.

Who stole the diamond?

I give it up.

I lay down my pen, after having as well as I could brought out the merits of the case, to light a cigar and enjoy it at ease. I remain, my dear reader, your most obedient.

Come round and see me.

(Detective Cahill here takes up the pen which Detective Holmes has laid down.)

The little story with which Mr. John Holmes has obliged us has the merit of differing from all other detective stories I ever came across in the regard that the villain is not discovered and brought to justice.

So far as his story goes this is all very well; but, unfortunately for our amateur story-teller, the detective, there is more of it.

I succeeded Mr. Holmes in this business at Mr. Loutrel's, and finally made up my mind to the same effect that the former did, viz., that neither Mr. Stratton (by-the-bye, he is engaged to Miss Minnie now) nor any of the family or servants knew anything about the disappearance of the diamond.

I too, went to London without the diamond having been discovered.

But one fine day it was offered for sale to a diamond broker, in London, to be resold in some foreign country for a thousand pounds.

And the fellow who wanted to drive this bargain was John Holmes, Esq., Private Detective!

Yes, sir! And, what's more, the Government offered to let him put up at their "hotel" at Portland for a period of years, which he accepted.

Clever dog he was; but he has had his day.

FACETIÆ.

THE REAL OWLS DE COLOGNE.—The debt on the cathedral.
—Punch.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY.

"MAMMA, isn't it very wicked to do behind one's back what one wouldn't do before one's face?"

"Certainly, Agnes."

"Well, baby bit my finger when I was looking another way."
—Punch.

"THOUGH LOST TO SIGHT TO MEMORY DEAR."
—Temple Bar.
—Punch.

BUTTERED ON BOTH SIDES.

MR. COX: "Why, I see the report says you took five pounds to vote for the Liberals, neighbour. Ain't you got no conscience, a sellin' of yourself that fashion?"

MR. BOX: "I don't deny as I took a five-pound note off the Liberals, John Cox. But you wait till you reads wot I took from the Conservatives next day. My conscience is clear—I never voted for either side at that there election, no more than the babe unborn."
—Moonshine.

"Oh, what a falling off is here!" as the man said who involuntarily made a descent from the top of a four storey house to the pavement, without the aid of "things material."
—Moonshine.

THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD EXHIBITION.—The great Powers tackling Turkey.
—Moonshine.

A SPIRIT MEDIUM.—"Not too much water, please."
—Moonshine.

WINTER OCCUPATION FOR REPUBLICAN SOCIAL GATHERINGS.—Toast the Royal Family.
—Moonshine.

A SIGNAL SUCCESS.—Acquitted for letting one train run into another.
—Moonshine.

A PERUSAL of the proceedings of the Sandwich Election Commission leads us to the conclusion that "Sandwich men" is a coined phrase.
—Moonshine.

TRUISMS TRIFLINGLY TREATED.

"LET well alone," as the tippler said to the teetotaler.

"Give me none of your jaw," as the filbert observed to the schoolboy.

"Honesty," remarked the worthy tradesman, "is the best policy. I know that, because I've tried both."

"Where there's a Will there's a way," as the Premier playfully put it at the last Cabinet Council.

"Never say dye," as the gentleman observed when he extracted some grey hairs from his favourite whisker.
—Judy.

EPITAPH ON A POTMAN.—"Take him for half-and-half we shall not look upon his like again."
—Judy.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

LAIRD: "Donald, I took particular notice of the road from Traig to Morar, and found it up hill all the way; and I am now taking particular notice of the road from Morar to Traig, and find it more up hill than from Traig to Morar."

DONALD: "Ay, laird, that's jooost it."
—Judy.

AGRICULTURAL MEM.

THE nearest approach to "perpetual mowing."—A steam reaping machine.
—Funny Folks.

"SPECIE(OU)s" ARGUMENTS.—Those used in Darwin's "Origin."
—Funny Folks.

A WATER—"SPOUT."—A nautical recitation.
—Funny Folks.

A "VOTE"—IVE OFFERING.—Three pounds to a Sandwich elector.
—Funny Folks.

"INDIGNATION MEETING."—A duel.
—Funny Folks.

A "CORN"—EE MAN.—A chiropodist.
—Funny Folks.

A PUPPYLAE PRACTICE.

A dog dealer has been prosecuted by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals for biting off a dog's tail, and pleaded in defence that it was the general custom to do so with this particular breed. As it was proved by a veterinary that the operation is most painful, we trust that this unnecessary cruelty will henceforth be curtailed.
—Fun.

AN "AIEY" OFFER.—To volunteer to assist the wind to "get up" again when it "falls."
—Fun.

TWO WORDS.

EARL ROY lay dying one summer eve;

He lay at his casement wide;

He looked on the green and fertile lands,

And said, with a flash of pride:

"Son Robert, this lordship fair is ours,

If any dispute thy right,

I have but two words to say to thee—

GRIP TIGHT!"

Two short, strong words, like a trumpet call;

Now listen to what they say:

There is a tide in affairs of men,

And it comes not every day;

If it bring thee good, in some good hour,

Take it, it is thy right;

Wouldst thou keep it thine? there is

one way—

GRIP TIGHT!

And if thou hast found thy work to do,

Then this is thy wisest part—

Count it as one of the best of gifts,

And do it, with hand and heart.

If slack or careless, others will seize

A blessing thou heldest too light;

The skirts of a happy circumstance

GRIP TIGHT!

Hast thou a home, though humble and

poor,

If love sit down by thy side,

Grip it so tight that nothing on earth

Thy heart and thy home divide.

If all gifts slip from thy heedless hand,

Keep this with a jealous might;

There's hope for the man who home and

wife

GRIP TIGHT!

Then here's to the man who can win and

keep

His love, his gold, and his land!

Here's to the true and steadfast heart!

To the sure and strong right hand!

To him who knows and can hold his place!

Who knows and can hold his right!

Who says to his heart in the tug of life

The two strong words of the good old

knight:

"GRIP TIGHT!" L. E. B.

STATISTICS.

JAPANESE RAILWAYS.—The Japanese railways now include a line from Tokio to Yokohama, eighteen miles in length, which was completed early in the year 1873, and had not been extended. Since that time a railway from Hiogo to Osaka, twenty-two miles long, and about 230 miles south of Tokio, was built, and afterwards extended to Kioto. Still more recently a further extension was made to Otsu, on the south side of Lake Biwa. These include all the railways completed in Japan, the length being about sixty miles. Another line has, however, been commenced from Tokio to Mayebashi, more than sixty miles long. This railway, the construction of which offers but few difficulties, will be of great commercial importance. A railway is projected in the northern island, and it is in

contemplation to extend the southern system from Kioto to the north of Lake Biwa, and for some distance up the centre of the island.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SUGAR CAKES.—One and a half pounds of butter, three pounds of brown sugar, cream them together, eight eggs beaten light, one teaspoonful of soda; mix in the flour two teaspoonfuls of cream tartar; mix with enough flour to roll out; one nutmeg.

POTATO PUDDING.—Two pounds potatoes boiled and mashed, one half-pound sugar, one-half pound butter, six eggs, wine-glass brandy, one nutmeg. Line a dish with paste, and bake.

WAFFLES.—One quart of sweet milk, warm, four eggs, a piece of butter the size of an egg, one teaspoonful of salt, teacupful of yeast, flour enough to make a stiff batter; let it rise three hours; bake in waffle irons.

APPLE FRITTERS.—Cut the apples into rounds as thin as possible, cut out the cores, pare away the skins, put them in a dish, pour over them a wine-glassful of brandy, and sprinkle sugar and grated lemon-rind over them; let them lie in this for an hour; half fill a good-sized saucepan with clarified dripping; make it quite hot, and when it is still, and a blue smoke rises from it, dip each slice separately into the batter, take it out in a tablespoon, and dip it with the batter that is in the spoon with it into the boiling fat; turn it over lightly with a fork, and when the fritter is crisp and lightly brown it is done enough. Put on paper to free from grease; sift white sugar on, and serve.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE truffle, that much-prized delicacy of the Parisians, is a natural production, and is found in large quantities in the neighbourhood of the capital. In the wood of Aigles, at Chantilly, and on the territory of Gournieux, an individual devotes himself to the search of the coveted esculent, accompanied, not by the traditional pig of Périgord, but by a little wild-looking dog which possesses a wonderful scent. In the months of October and November the truffle hunter earns as much as eighteen or twenty francs a day.

MR. S. S. LLOYD, late M.P. for Plymouth, speaking at a meeting of Conservatives in Birmingham, the other day, said, referring to the question of finance, that the sum of about £270,000 was raised at the Reform Club, for party purposes, at the late general election, two dukes contributing £45,000 each, and another considerably more.

THE Postmaster-General's scheme for saving money by postage stamps seems worth an experiment on a more extended scale. In one county in which it is having a trial no fewer than 135 new accounts have been opened at the Post-office Savings' Bank since September. The authorities believe that this would, if the system were generally adopted, be followed by as encouraging results elsewhere, especially in districts where their daily avocations call large numbers of working men together.

EVERYBODY has heard of the man who left home to drown himself, but being caught in a shower returned, having a strong objection to getting wet. An analogous case is reported from Paris. A man of sixty went to the Quai d'Orsay with the intention of drowning himself. He took off his clothes and threw them into the water, and then in a perfectly nude state entered the river. The coldness of the water, however, when it reached his waist was more than he could bear. He quickly regained the bank, and having no clothing, ran into a neighbouring tavern, borrowed some garments, and was handed over to the police.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS are informed that no charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

A. W. K. Y.—If you look at the second column of this page you will find that we have complied with your request so far as we can understand it. We hope that the little poetic composition entitled "The Sailor's Household" will be found "suitable for a young sailor."

THOMAS R.—We are obliged for your communication. Our supply of good original fiction is however quite out of our requirements. We have therefore no space for the translation from the French you refer to.

A CONSTANT READER.—If our recollection is not at fault the year that "it snowed in May" was 1867, when a horse called "The Hermit" won the Derby at Epsom, the race being run in a snowstorm.

SOLTYKAR.—Mrs. Allen's Hair Restorer is what we believe of the very best preparations of the kind. You will take no harm from its use at any rate.

PAUL.—Send your descriptive letter in the ordinary way, and it will be inserted as space permits.

T. V.—You cannot obtain a licence for the prosecution of an illegal act.

LILY.—A receipt stamp is requisite every time you give a written acknowledgment of money received to the amount of two pounds and upwards.

S. S.—We have not received the address inquired for.

T. C. P., R. B. L., E. A. E., and JULIUS CÉSAR, will see by our announcement, which we have frequently to repeat, that we make no charge for the insertion of such communications.

A LOVELY ONE.—The sum charged for the purchase of an annuity for a female of fifty-five would be regulated according to the amount required and whether the periodical allowance is to be immediate or deferred. At any post-office you can obtain free of charge a circular of the rules concerning Government annuities, and all necessary particulars will be found therein. You can also obtain an annuity from one of the private insurance companies, but in that case you must make your own selection.

CLARA ANN MAY.—The Queen went in state with the customary accessories to open the last Parliament—not the present one.

C. F. F.—You had better make your inquiries in the locality referred to. We should have much difficulty in obtaining the information which you can readily get for yourself.

W. D.—Pimples are sometimes got rid of by bathing the face in a tolerably strong solution of borax and water.

R. S. C.—To clean a glass bottle, chop up a large potato very fine and put it in the bottle with some warm water, and shake it rapidly until it is clean.

E. G.—We know of nothing that will prevent the growth of superfluous hair.

HARD OF HEARING.—The most efficacious thing known to us as likely to effect a cure or at any rate a satisfactory alleviation of your distressing deafness is Osborne's Golden Drops. Most chemists keep the preparation.

P. G.—The origin of the shamrock as the emblem of Ireland is stated to have taken its rise from St. Patrick, when he could not make his hearers believe in the unity of the Trinity, plucking a shamrock and asking them whether the unity of the Trinity was not as possible as for the three leaflets to be united on one stem.

THOMAS.—Mushrooms are not grown from seed, but from a mycelium, or thready fibre, called the spawn, which spreads in every direction through the soil. This grows in the ground, out of sight, the mushroom first appearing on it as a small knob, pushing its way to the surface, where it rapidly develops. It is usually found in pastures where horses are kept.

N. S.—The saying that it is unlucky to sit down to dinner when the party consists of thirteen persons must be referred to its origin to a popular belief entertained in the days of superstition that after the betrayal of Christ by Judas that number at a meal was a bad omen. It was thought that out of thirteen persons there must be one wickedly disposed.

LILIAN, SAUCY MAUD and SMILING ROSE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men with a view to matrimony. Lilian is fair, medium height, golden hair, blue eyes. Saucy Maud is dark, medium height, dark brown hair, grey eyes. Smiling Rose is fair, brown hair, blue eyes. Respondents must be tall and dark.

KINGFISHER J., a seaman in the Royal Navy, twenty-one, tall, fair, hazel eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

ORANGE and LEMON, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Orange is eighteen, brown hair, dark eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing. Lemon is nineteen, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be about twenty-two, tall, dark, of loving dispositions, fond of home and music.

T. H. B. and A. C. B., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. T. H. B. is twenty, tall, fair, fond of home and music. A. C. B. is twenty-three, medium height, fair, blue eyes, loving, fond of home and children. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-two.

JAMES, twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady.

THE SAILOR'S HOUSEHOLD.

Her cheeks are wet and her eyes are dim,
And her baby upon her knee,
She seeks in vain for a sigh from him
Who tarries upon the sea.
"Oh, sad," she moans, "is the sailor's lot,
And sadder this lot of mine,
To be left on shore in the lonely cot,
And to worry and wait and pine!"

Up speaks her boy, as with knife in hand,
He fashions his pigmy sloop,
"To naught but life in a ship well manned,"
Laughs he, "will I ever stoop."
"Oh, hush, my dear!" she in terror cries;
"The land is the place for thee.
Contentment e'er the rover flies
Who follows the fickle sea."

Her little girl, with her doll at play,
Half under her breathing hums:
"I will marry a sailor lad some day,
If one of my fancy comes."
"Not you, as I am a sailor's wife!"
Cries her mother, more fretful still.
"Are you both bewitched, that you vex my
life
With your crochets wild and ill?"

Tosses the baby its hands and toes
In a seaward-straining reach.
"Papa tums home, tums home!" it crows,
With its sweet, imperfect speech.
"Sweet: what a sailor's own you are!"
She sobs, as she hugs it tight;
For there, to be sure, by the outer bar,
Is the well-known sail in sight.

The boy and the girl can't understand
Why their mother so hates the sea,
For they're all at once at the place to land,
And none so content as she.
And the anchor's out, and the eager oar
In the rowlock rattles free,
And the coastwise sailor is home once more
With his wife and children three. N. D. U.

FORESTAY, MAINSTAY and MIZENSTAY, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Forestay is twenty-one, medium height, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of home and children. Mainstay is twenty-one, medium height, hazel eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of music. Mizenstay is twenty-two, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Respondents must be between nineteen and twenty-two.

FRED, a signalman, would like to correspond with a young lady. He is nineteen, medium height, hazel eyes, fond of music. Respondent must be nineteen, good-looking, domesticated.

LOVING HETT, twenty-five, fair, loving, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a dark gentleman between twenty-six and thirty-five.

WILL TRUELOVE, twenty-two, tall, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady between nineteen and twenty-two.

ARTHUR and GEORGE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Arthur is nineteen, medium height, fair, fond of music and dancing. George is twenty, medium height, fair, fond of singing and dancing. Respondents must be about the same age, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

SQUARE and COMPASS, mechanics, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Square is twenty-three, fair, fond of home and music. Compass is dark, medium height.

LUCY, tall, dark, dark eyes, handsome, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty-four, tall, dark, good-looking.

S. E. M. A., a widow, twenty-five, dark, good-tempered, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young gentleman.

J. H., twenty-three, medium height, dark, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about seventeen, tall, fair, fond of home and music.

AGAMEMNON, POLYPHEMUS, ORION, NELSON, SWIFT, and BLACK PINNACE, six seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with six young ladies. Agamemnon is tall, fair, of a loving disposition. Polyphemus is twenty-two, tall, dark, fond of home and music. Orion is fair, medium height, hazel eyes, fond of children. Nelson is medium height, auburn hair, hazel eyes, fond of home and dancing. Swift is twenty-two, medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing. Black Pinnace is twenty-four, tall, fair.

ANNIE, EMMA, ALLIE, and DOLLY, four friends, would like to correspond with four young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Annie is twenty-two, medium height, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children. Emma is seventeen, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Alice is seventeen, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home. Dolly is eighteen, tall, dark, hazel eyes, fond of children.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

VIOLET is responded to by—Tim Flanagan, tall, dark, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition.

ROSE by—Joe Muggins, medium height, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

LILY by—Flash Harry, medium height, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

NELLIE by—Bertram, twenty, medium height, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

LOVELY ANDREW by Violet, medium height, fair, good-looking.

GEORGE H. by—Ada, nineteen, tall, dark, fond of home.

GEORGE by—A. E. A., twenty, dark, grey eyes, fond of home.

LITTLE ISAAC by—Marion, tall, auburn hair, fond of music.

DICKY DAWSON by—Annie, medium height, brown hair, fond of music and singing.

ROB ROR by—Maria G.

GEORGE by—Maggie, twenty-two, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes.

SAM by—Lizzie, nineteen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes.

THISTLE by—Willie, twenty-three, fond of home and children.

CHARLIE by—Emmeline, twenty-one, fair, of a loving disposition.

B. C. H. by—Lottie, nineteen, dark hair and eyes, loving.

R. C. by—Heloise, twenty-one, tall, dark hair and eyes.

L. F. P. by—J. H.

LITTLE ISAAC by—Lill, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of home and music.

DICKY DAWSON by—Joe, medium height, dark hair, grey eyes, fond of home.

H. C. B. by—Lilly, nineteen, tall, dark, fond of home.

LOTTIE by—T. P. C., thirty-two, tall, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music.

ANEMONE by—Arthur E. B., eighteen, medium height.

J. H. F. by—L. A., twenty-four, tall, dark, domesticated.

MAC by—B. W., seventeen, tall, dark, fond of music.

B. C. H. by—Lizzie, twenty-one, tall, fair, domesticated, fond of home.

PRE-MARE by—Lavinia, twenty, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

K. R. by—Lydia, twenty, medium height, fond of home and children.

MODERN JACK by—Ada, nineteen, medium height, fair, golden hair, fond of home and children.

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London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH & CO.